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ISSUE 168 • JULY 2005 • FREE

STV won fair vote

West Coast Poetry
coming to town

Susan Musgrave and 40 more poets in Vancouver for Canada's largest poetry festival

Codex cramps vitamins • US invaded Iraq, Iran next • Teflon trouble
Organic rules! • Unknown soldier stops the world from blowing up

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Common Ground

Publisher & Senior Editor · *Joseph Roberts*
Graphic Design · *John William*
Contributors · *Robert Alstead*
Crystal Andrus · J. Patrick Boyer
Stewart Brinton · Guy Dauncey · Ishi Dinim
Johnny Frem · Ilona Hedi Granik
Arne Hansen · Carolyn Herriot
Paul Loeb · Vesanto Melina
Geoff Olson · Gwen Randall-Young
Marya Skrypiczajko · David Suzuki
Eckhart Tolle · Sonya Weir

Contact Common Ground:
Phone: **604-733-2215** Fax: 604-733-4415
For out of area advertisers
call toll-free 1-800-365-8897
Advertising: admin@commonground.ca
Editorial: editor@commonground.ca

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OUR COVER:
According to photographer Barbara Pedrick, who shot our cover photo, it took a crew of eight to conduct the shoot of Susan Musgrave at Cloverpoint. Susan's friend, the poet Linda Rogers, took care of two Sofies, her own granddaughter Sofie and Susan and Stephen's daughter, also named Sofie. Pedrick's assistant held the reflector, and various family and friends held back the hordes attracted to the famous car. Throughout, Susan kept getting out of the car and re-gluing figures. Photo copyright Barbara Pedrick, 1997. Email bpedrick@pacificcoast.net, visit www.pacificcoast.net/~bpedrick/, or call 250-380-7880.

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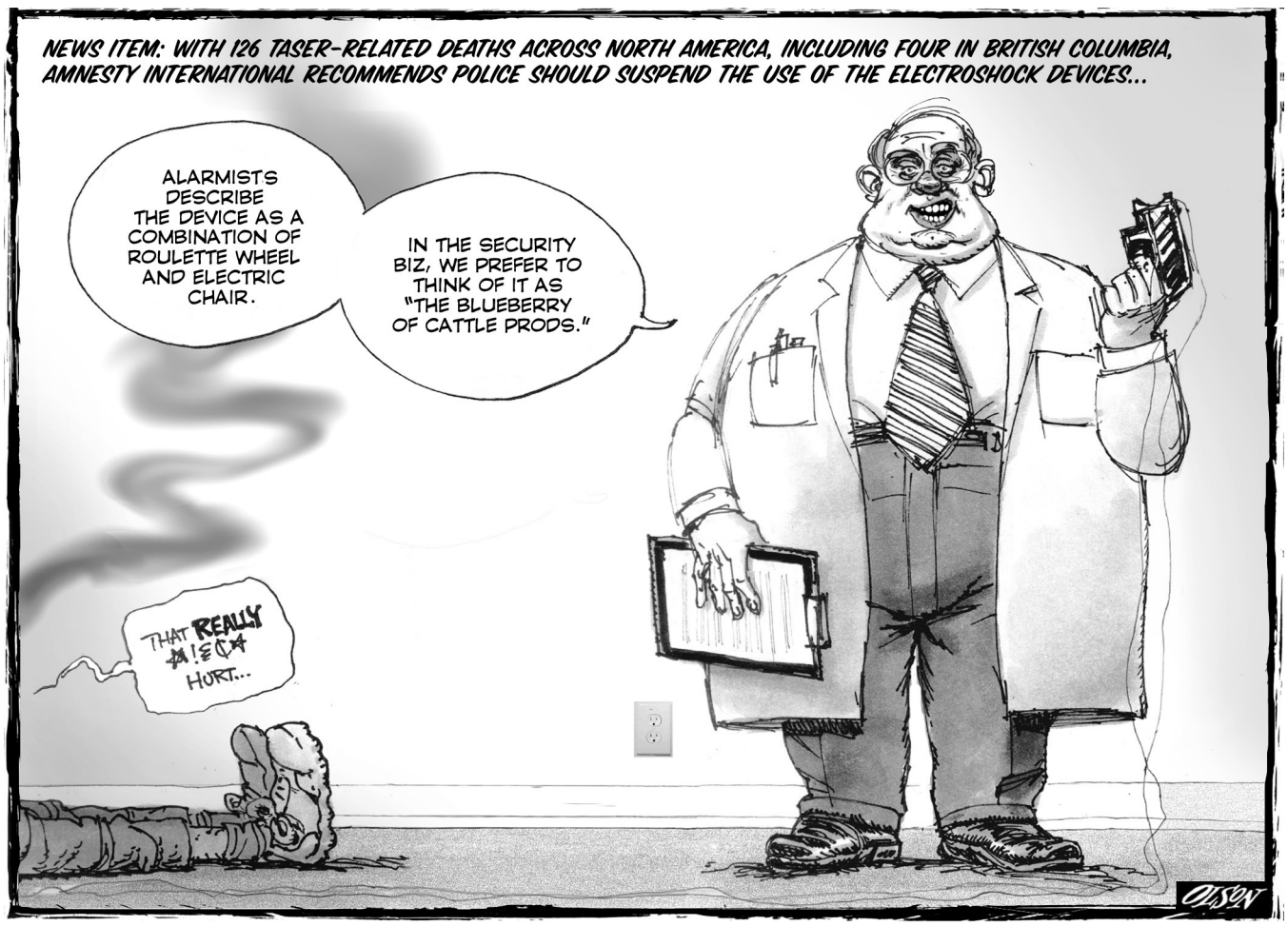

NEWS ITEM: WITH 126 TASER-RELATED DEATHS ACROSS NORTH AMERICA, INCLUDING FOUR IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL RECOMMENDS POLICE SHOULD SUSPEND THE USE OF THE ELECTROSHOCK DEVICES...
ALARMISTS DESCRIBE THE DEVICE AS A COMBINATION OF ROULETTE WHEEL AND ELECTRIC CHAIR.
IN THE SECURITY BIZ, WE PREFER TO THINK OF IT AS "THE BLUEBERRY OF CATTLE PRODS."
THAT REALLY MIGHT HURT...
OLSON

Poetry fest

STRAIGHT FROM THE PAGE AND LIVE ON STAGE

by Sonya Weir

Sean McGarragle, artistic director for the *West Coast Poetry Festival*, tells a great joke about poetry, acknowledging friend and colleague Graham Olds with the little gem. As operator of the *Vancouver Poetry Slam*, Olds has an in-depth knowledge of the world of performing poets, and has wryly noted: "Poetry is the lowest paid artistic expression; mimes get paid more and they have nothing to say." While it's a great joke, unfortunately, too many poets would agree.

Montreal's Alexis O'Hara

Sixteen months ago, while taking Prof. Derksen's English lit class at Simon Fraser University, it occurred to McGarragle that Canada didn't really have a "single, poetic event that was worthy of the talent that our country fosters." The 29-year-old McGarragle had the "nebulous little idea" to bring together what he calls the two different genres of poetry at work in Canada. According to McGarragle, the animosity between the two groups was pretty intense. In one camp were the well-known, textually-based poets, often the recipients of a Governor General's Award, and in the other, the lively, unorthodox, spoken word artists, who used metaphor and literary devices to tell their stories.

The problem lay in the spoken word artists not being taken seriously by the textually-based poets. On the other side, the conception existed that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. McGarragle approached fellow classmate Michael Campbell with his idea for a poetry festival, and the two collaborated to make it a reality. Ultimately, Campbell assumed the role of production manager, McGarragle became the artistic director, and even Prof. Derksen took to the stage for the inaugural event.

McGarragle shares that he was really surprised at the speed that the funding came through for the first event last year. He was also thrilled with the public's response, noting an "awesome" average attendance of 110 to 130 people per day. He anticipates an even larger attendance this year. In promotional writing about the festival, McGarragle has said: "The *West Coast Poetry Festival* is the single largest poetry event in Canadian history, but its roots can be traced back to a single thing. The genre of poetry itself, which has given us plenty and asked nothing save an open ear, is the motivating force behind the festival's walk to fruition."

The festival celebrates some of the finest voices in the Canadian poetic tradition with a diverse range of genres and cultures. The 2005 festival combines spoken word and traditional poetry, exposing the

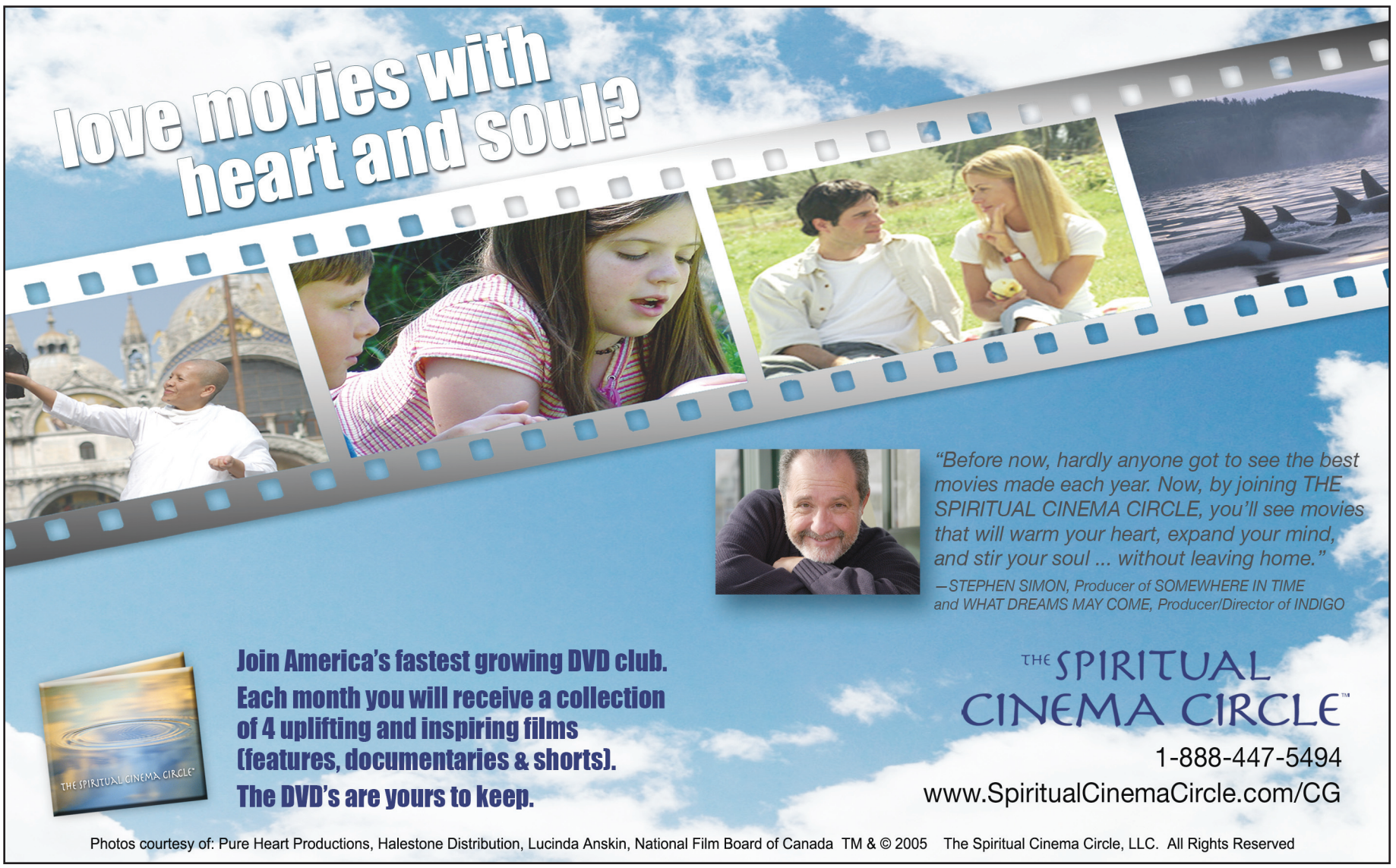
continued on page 8

Spoken word mama Sheri-D Wilson

WEST COAST POETRY IN MOTION

by Johnny Frem

The Canada Council dispatches a jet moving writers across the country. Troupes of performance poets, who share cars to tour festivals, mark Vancouver in their itineraries from July 7 to 10. A beat-up jalopy adorned with plastic toys waits for the ferry over from Vancouver Island. From all over, as the heat of summer rolls in, so too does some of our greatest poetic talent. For four days at three venues, the second annual West Coast Poetry Festival showcases an eclectic sampling of the many ways words and sounds can blow your mind. Whether straight from the page or live on stage, this festival has everything - more than 40 poets from Canada and the US, all entirely free. For more information on the single largest poetry event in our young nation's history, go to www.wcpf.ca or call 604-782-1666.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‘Double 60 percent’ anomaly for BC-STV referendum objectionable

by J. Patrick Boyer, QC

Since 1898, on 15 separate occasions, British Columbians have gone to the polls to vote on ballot questions, each time approving or rejecting a proposal by a “simple” majority – half the votes cast, plus one or more. This year, British Columbians voted on a question about the system for electing MLAs, but for the first time, somebody had changed the rule.

On May 17 this year, 57 percent of electors affirmed the proposal for BC-STV – a clear win under the rule that until this year had governed referendums on everything from enfranchising women, conscripting soldiers, changing the Constitution and adopting public health insurance. But the law had been changed to require double 60 percent approval: more than 60 percent of all voters had to approve, and more than 60 percent of all constituencies had to approve.

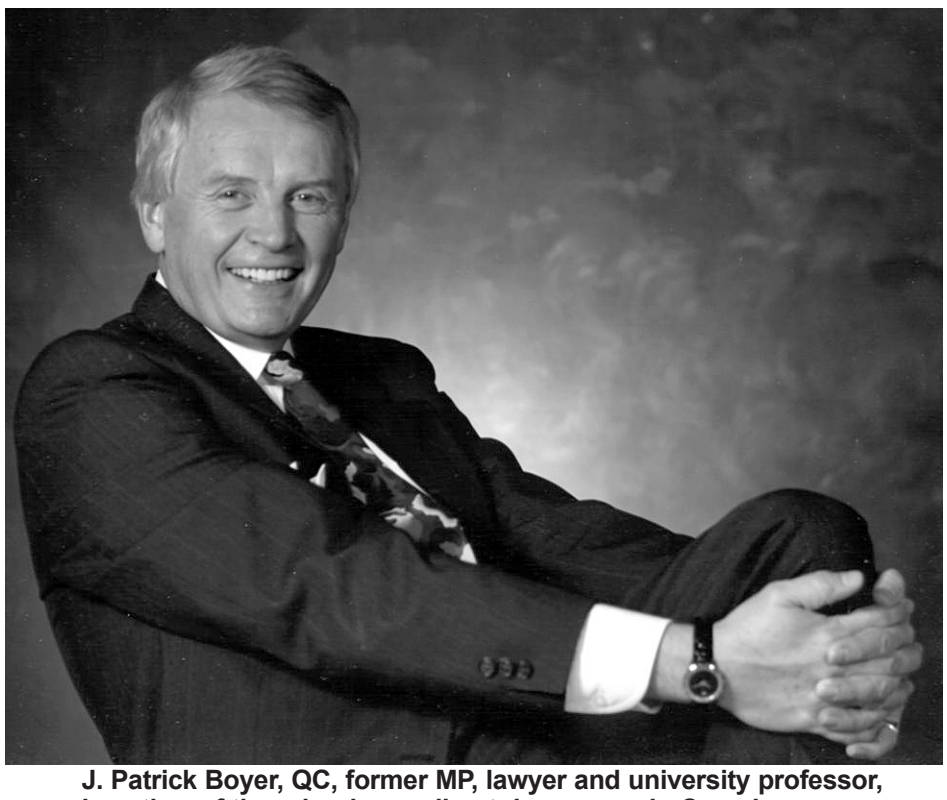
So who invented this new legal definition for democratic approval in a referendum? Why was this double 60 rule only to apply to the referendum on how MLAs get elected? The rule is still “50 percent plus one” on any other ballot question, according to the Referendum Act of British Columbia.

The answer is a trick. It’s not what you’d expect. The someone who invented the double 60 rule which goes against the established democratic norm in British Columbia and Canada, a norm so deeply embedded in our history and democratic practice as to be one of the rules of our “unwritten Constitution” as well as one of the written rules in British Columbia statutes that governed all ballot questions in the past and will govern them all in the future according to present law, is the very same person who after May 17’s endorsement of STV by a clear majority of British Columbians said he “didn’t want to change the rules.”

Not only that, but the correct answer to the double 60 question is a double trick: the person who invented the double 60 rule, a new threshold for approval that is unprecedented and arguably unconstitutional, is the very same person who sponsored the whole enterprise that took voters into the May 17 referendum to make provincial elections more democratic in the first place.

While Premier Gordon Campbell enjoys the summer figuring out how to extricate his government from its self-created conundrum over the May 17 referendum, British Columbians know they have approved the proportional electoral system and can figure out what to do to help their government implement their democratically approved right to STV.

Seen in light of history, it’s no big deal. The premier could just get on with it. After Premier W.A.C. Bennett came to power with his Social Credit/Progressive Conservative alliance in 1953 under a single transferable vote electoral system, he introduced legislation to repeal that electoral system and replace it with the simple plurality or “first-past-the-post” system. He didn’t hold a referendum on changing the province’s electoral system. He didn’t think a change in the Election Act about the way ballots get counted on election night to determine who becomes an MLA required 60 percent approval, or double 60 percent. Nor did anyone else. The rule is that in a constitutional democracy a government can introduce legislation and if it is given three readings and debated and approved by 50 percent plus one of the members it becomes law and gets royal assent. That was the rule half a century ago under which Premier Bennett brought about changes in the electoral system. It’s still the rule today. It has not been changed.



J. Patrick Boyer, QC, former MP, lawyer and university professor, is author of three books on direct democracy in Canada

Premier Campbell isn’t the first British Columbia leader to struggle translating direct democracy into legislative action. From the province’s first referendum on November 25, 1909, on a local option policy for liquor control, down to last month’s vote on a revised electoral system, British Columbia holds the record for the most ballot questions in Canada. And since the issues that get referred to citizens for resolution in ballot box democracy are invariably controversial, more than one premier has grabbed this democratic bull by the horns only to get skewered by not understanding the art of democratic statesmanship involved.

Even before the 1909 BC vote on local option, the liquor issue had been on a ballot in British Columbia as elsewhere across Canada in 1898, when the national government of Liberal Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier presented the first country-wide vote on the question of prohibiting liquor. A majority of British Columbians voted for Prohibition, as did majorities in other provinces – except Quebec, which strongly rejected what was seen as a Protestant puritanical campaign. Laurier grappled with the outcome, then realized no national standard was possible, so declared Ottawa out of the field, leaving implementation of Prohibition to individual provinces that so wished, which is what happened. A large number of provincial ballot questions ensued, including in British Columbia, over bringing in the prohibition of alcohol, and after the dry years of legal hypocrisy when organized crime supplied booze to all manner of law-abiding citizens, other plebiscites to repeal Prohibition. In British Columbia the first such provincial ballot question after the 1898 Canadian plebiscite on prohibition of liquor, came to a vote on November 25, 1909, on whether to adopt a “local option” policy for liquor control. Then, on September 14, 1916, voters across the province went again to the polls to vote on prohibition of liquor. How greatly alcohol and all the business going with it dominated the first half of twentieth century public affairs is demonstrated by the fact that British Columbians went to the polls three more times to address the government’s policy in the matter. On October 20, 1920, the ballot question was on Temperance. On June 20, 1924, the issue was sale of beer by the glass. On June 12, 1952, yet another ballot question asked citizens of the province for further direction on regulating the sale of liquor. Including the vote in the Canadian plebiscite of 1898, that’s six times British Columbians marked ballots to help decide public policy in relation to alcohol. In every single case, the ballot question would carry or be defeated by a vote of 50 percent plus one.

This pattern was similar in most parts of the country, with only New Brunswick never having a provincial vote on liquor. Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and PEI were balloting on booze just as much, as their premiers sought to engage the people in an issue that was dividing their cabinets, splitting their parties, and turning their legislatures into turmoil. The politics of alcohol was a major component of public life for 70 years. In other provinces, too, the rule was that a simple majority – not 60 percent, and certainly not double 60 percent – would determine the issue.

In British Columbia, this democratic device of ballot questions was applied to other major issues as well, and generally ahead of most other jurisdictions in Canada. Extending the right to vote to women is an example. In September 1916, BC conducted the only referendum every held in Canada on women’s suffrage. Ironically, it was a vote in which only men could participate – a double irony, in fact, because as early as 1873 BC had enfranchised women for municipal elections. While it may have had this double irony, the 1916 women’s suffrage referendum did not require double 60. It seemed only natural to all concerned that a democratic verdict would mean 50 percent plus one.

More than that, the 1916 referendum provided interesting entertainment for voters who saw their premier twist and turn in a conundrum of his own making. As the dynamics of this public consultation process developed, and popular opinion grew to favour changing the electoral system to add women as voters so the legislature would be more reflective of the province, they overrode the calculations of the government. Conservative Premier William J. Bowser, who had decided on the plebiscite as a means of delaying and ultimately defeating the drive for women’s suffrage, could see the strength of popular opinion and did not foolishly try to defy it, so in a classic BC finale, ended up campaigning in favour of the very measure he had sought to avoid. Women in British Columbia had won the vote.

Public health insurance was another substantive subject on which British Columbians expressed their judgment in a referendum held June 1, 1937, a time when there was no system of state health insurance anywhere on the North American continent. The high-stakes drama of medical politics in Saskatchewan in the 1960s when Tommy Douglas’ social democratic government battled to bring in public health insurance while defiant

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Unspun heroes

HOW WE ESCAPED NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST: THE LEGEND OF STANISLAV PETROV

by Geoff Olson

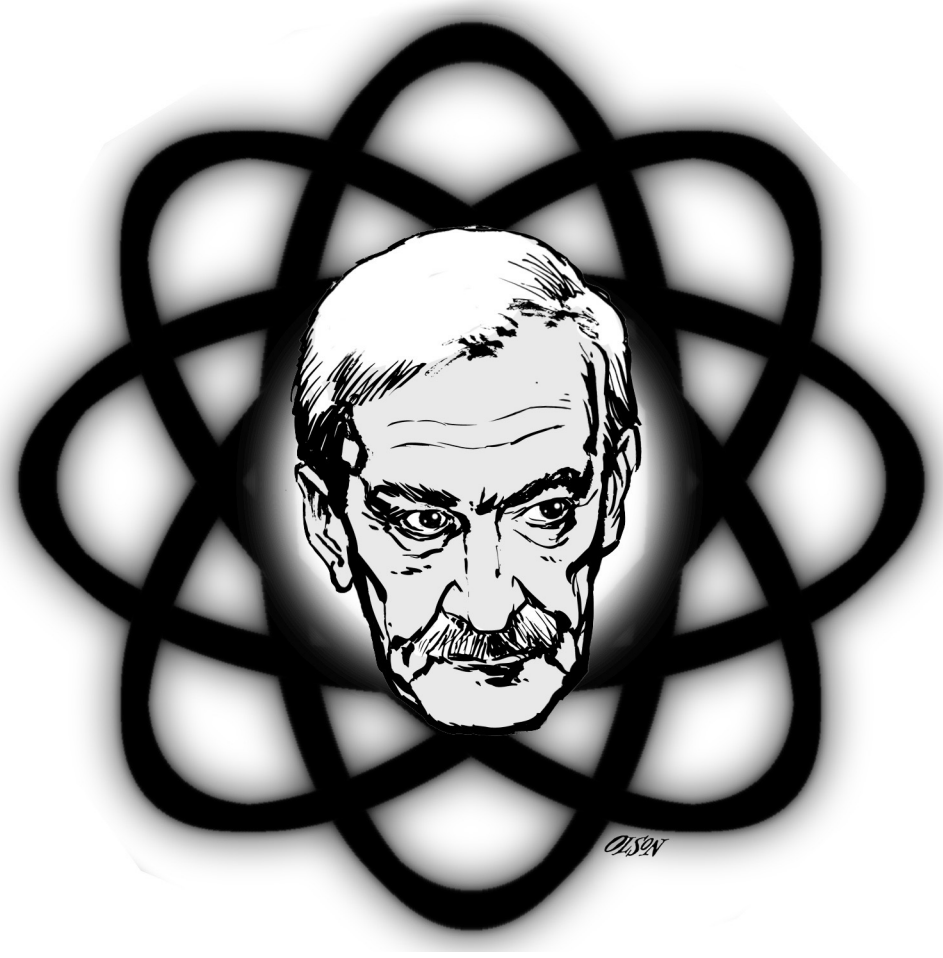
Can the efforts of one anonymous individual act for the greater good in the far off future? Can a single person, at the right place at the right time, catalyze change on a historic scale? In this series we look at individuals, some known, but others relatively unknown, who accomplished great deeds, far beyond what they may have thought possible themselves. Their accomplishments in the arts, sciences, in the political sphere, or in the service of global peace or justice, have not just burned paths for others to follow; they have inspired others to set out and create paths of their own.

September, 1983. Michael Jackson's *Thriller* is still on the charts. Jane Fonda's *Workout Book* tops the bestseller lists. NBC's *Saturday Night Live* is showing promise with funnier material. In British Columbia, labour unrest is paving the way for the province-wide "Solidarity strike." South of the border, the "acting president" Ronald Reagan is high in the saddle, and musing publicly about a Rube Goldberg-like missile defence system in outer space.

Few people know how close the world came to nuclear war that month. Even fewer know about the one person who very likely saved humanity from catastrophe at that time.

On September 5, a Korean airlines jet, with many Americans aboard, disappeared over Sakhalin, a Soviet island just north of Japan. Reagan responded with his description of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire." The KGB communicated to its Western operatives, warning them to prepare for possible nuclear war. It's now thought that throughout 1983 the Kremlin assumed the United States and its NATO allies were planning a nuclear first strike on the Soviet Union.

With the US-led NATO organizing a military exercise that centered on using tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, these fears may have been excessive, but they weren't entirely irrational. Reagan's Star Wars speech earlier that year gave every indication the US/Soviet antiballistic missile treaty was heading for history's dustbin. It seemed the Reagan administration had little or no concern about the fallout – literally and figuratively – from what many scientists on both sides of the Iron Curtain regarded as a dangerously destabilizing extension of the cold war into space.



The man who saved us all.

The doctrine of mutually assured destruction (MAD) had seemingly acted to keep the peace for decades. The US and USSR both pursued a cold war policy of responding to the first signs of a nuclear attack by firing off most of their inventory of atomic weapons – which would certainly spell the end for western civilization, if not most of humanity. Nuclear deterrence worked, seemingly: US and Soviet leaders had a thermonuclear gun to each other's head. But the times had changed. The oval office was now occupied by a former film actor who once costarred with a chimpanzee, a man who had a gig during the McCarthy era as Hollywood's most prominent redbaiter.

Throughout the cold war, US officials inflated intelligence estimates of the "missile gap" – and the former governor was not a man given to measured reflection about the actual threat from communism. He was a man who speculated openly about trees causing pollution, and the biblical end times. Within the Kremlin, the politburo's aging cold warriors may well have debated if they shouldn't shoot first, before this brylcreemed ham actor had a chance.

In this overheated climate, close calls involving escalating nuclear conflict were inevitable. How close, we only came to know in retrospect, after the Russians' 1998 declassification of an incident 15 years earlier.

Deep inside Serpukhov-15, a secret bunker somewhere in the Soviet Union, military officers regularly monitored the regime's early warning satellites. On September 26, 1983, Serpukhov-15 rotated its officers, putting Lt. Colonel Stanislav Petrov in charge of the ballistic missile early warning system (BMEWS) command and control post. Petrov was not the regular duty officer at the bunker. A 2003 report in *The Moscow News*, notes that he "was to man a shift at the control panel in that capacity twice a month, just to keep his skills from getting rusty."

Petrov had been told repeatedly by his superiors that the United States intended to overwhelm Soviet forces with a massive nuclear strike. It was his duty to push the button at the first sign of an attack. And he knew that duty well; Petrov had written the manual instructions for what to do in just this event.

The system at Serpukhov-15 relied on human monitoring of the satellite imagery, but the Soviets, concerned with human fallibility, added a computer system to warn of potential threats, while minimizing human interference. On the night of September 26, the Soviet's electronic Golem alerted Petrov and his fellow colleagues to an apparent launch from the US mainland. Petrov sat watching a huge screen displaying satellite imagery of North America, when "an alarm at the

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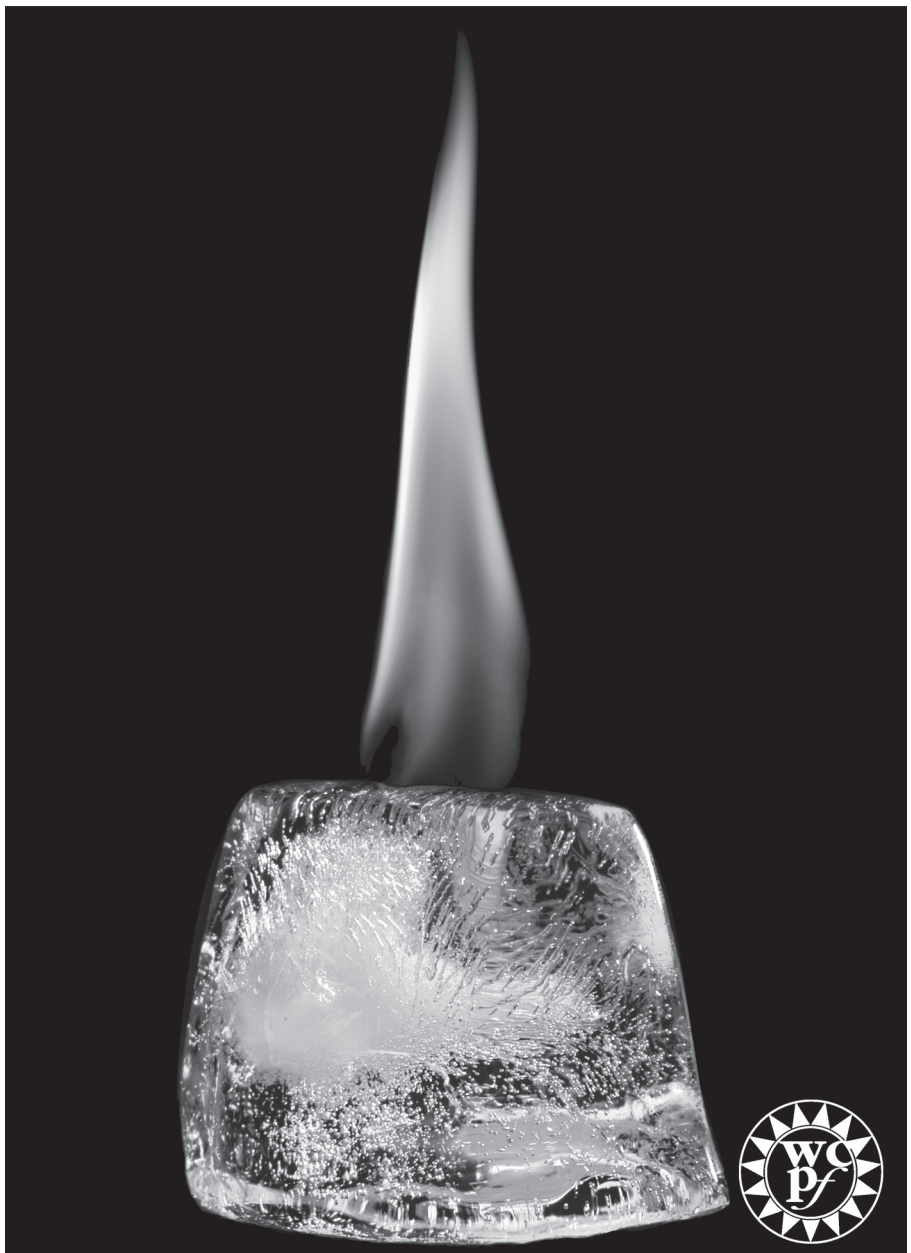
festival-goer to a wide variety of innovative artists. Forty-six poets are featured this year, including George Elliot Clarke, Shane Koyczan, Susan Musgrave, Roy Miki and many more. In keeping with the spirit of generosity and diversity found in great literature, all events are free to the public.

McGarragle is passionate about the medium of spoken word, citing Ivan Coyote as the best storyteller he has ever had the occasion to hear, and he also feels that Vancouver is a "pillar of the spoken word community in Canada." McGarragle sees himself being involved with running festivals for the next eight years or so. After that, he is astute enough to realize that the next generation will undoubtedly be more in touch with the pulse of spoken word than he will be. Much to his credit, McGarragle is pretty much in touch with the contemporary and classic poetry scenes, and I was impressed when he pulled a quote by Robert Frost: "Using free verse is like playing tennis with the net down." I say, "Let the games begin."

The *West Coast Poetry Festival* is sponsored by the Vancouver Public Library, the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, Canada Council for the Arts, ESU, SFSS and the Dominion Hotel.

Slam champion Shane Koyczan



WEST COAST POETRY FESTIVAL 2005

Thursday July 7th
The Vancouver Public Library, 350 West Georgia Street
•7:00 PM Opening Ceremonies: bill bissett, Susan Musgrave
The Lamplighter Pub, 210 Abbott St @ Water
•9:00 PM Tons of Fun University: Mike McGee, Shane Koyczan, C.R. Avery
Friday July 8th
The Vancouver Public Library, 350 West Georgia Street
•6:00 PM Redress: Roy Miki, Larissa Lai, Goh Poh Seng
•7:30 PM Sirens:Sheri-D Wilson, Evelyn Parry, Oni the Haitian Sensation
•9:00 PM This is Definitely Not Rap Music:
Alexis Oara, Wayde Compton, Jason DeCouto and Hilary Peach
Saturday July 9th
SFU Harbour Centre, 515 West Hastings Street
•1:00 PM Girls Night In: Daphne Marlatt, Sharon Thesen, Di Brandt, Betsy Warland
•2:00 PM Teen Angst Poetry Night: Hosted by Sara Bynoe
•3:00 PM Pandora's Collective Workshop
•4:00 PM The CFSW Preview: Kevin Matthews, Darek Dawda, Randy Jacobs
•5:00 PM SFU Spotlight: Matt Nashlenas, Sandra Pettman, Colette Gagnon
•6:00 PM Tish Review: George Bowering, Fred Wah, Jamie Reid
The Lamplighter Pub, 210 Abbott St @ Water
•8:00 PM Music by Bent Tail
•9:00 PM Dry Sad Poetry: Fernando Raguero, R.C. Weslowski, Martin Van Steinburg,
T-Paul Ste Marie, Al Mader and more
Sunday July 10th
SFU Harbour Centre, 515 West Hastings Street
•12:30 PM Young Women: Chrystalene Buhler, Emily Campbell,
Nola Semczyszyn and Kim Shaughnessy
•1:00 PM Boys Night In: Tim Bowling, rob mclennan, Matt Rader
•2:00 PM Open Michelle: hosted by Graham Olds
•2:30 PM SFU Poetry Student Spotlight: Lori McNulty, Linda King, Vicki Grieve
•3:30 PM Foreign Exchange: Karen Finneyfrock, Christa Bell, Jack McCarthy
•5:30 PM Crossover:Christian Bok, Stuart Ross, MaryLou Rowley, Chrystalene Buhler
•7:30 PM The Three Georges:George Stanley, George Elliot Clarke,George Bowering
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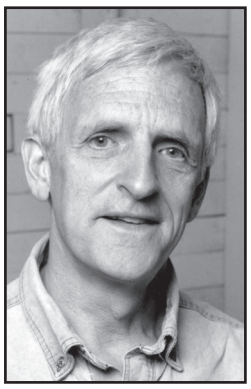

Matthew Fox

"The Universe itself, blessed and graced, is the proper starting point for spirituality ... Ours is a time of emerging awareness of the interconnectivity of all things. Mysticism is all about interconnectivity. Thus ours is a mystical time." Matthew Fox

The Rev. Dr. Matthew Fox, a postmodern theologian and ordained priest since 1967, is president of the Wisdom University, and co-director of the Naropa Oakland MLA in Oakland, California. Author of 26 books, including: *Creation Spirituality, Original Blessing; Creativity: Where the Divine and the Human Meet*, and his most recent, *A New Reformation*.

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Summer's song

STORY SLAM WINNER FOR JUNE

by Stewart Brinton

A few years ago in June, half-starved and light-headed, with my saxophone in its case strung across my shoulder, I found myself descending a dimly lit staircase and I slipped on something oily and toppled. Trying to keep my saxophone from dropping, I twisted and pulled a groin muscle. After a sleepless night I went to my doctor, who told me I would have to avoid lifting heavy objects for three months. My tenor saxophone weighs 10 pounds (25 pounds in its case). Suddenly I was forbidden to touch it.

I am a musician: I must play music, so I rekindled my love affair with the harmonica. I hadn't seriously played the harmonica for seven years. Previously I'd played blues harp for 20 years, but after playing in too many dingy clubs where the bartender made more on tips than the entire band and dealing with band members who were talented drunks and drug addicts, I sold my equipment and quit the blues scene. To quote New Orleans pianist Doctor John: "Music of itself is sacred. Music's of the spirit, business is of the meat world. There ain't no connection between the two."

The harmonica became my summer long meditation. One day I found myself in the alcove in front of Art Beatus Gallery. With its window panes and pebbled concrete flooring it provided a resonant chamber that amplified the harmonica. I stared through the window at a painting by Chinese artist Shyh-Charng Lo. It was a pastoral setting with lush foliage in the foreground and distant mountains framed by sky and water. The oil painting shimmered with the heat and humidity of summer. It reminded me of my childhood when I would head down to the lake with fins and goggles and inner tube, ready for a day of water sports. The painting inspired me and an upbeat melody emerged. I called it *The Summer Song*.

Hour after hour I played *The Summer Song*, fashioning and refashioning the melody, frequently returning to Art Beatus Gallery to stare at the painting in the window. I went inside and perused the exhibit of Shyh-Charng Lo's paintings. All his paintings were pastoral and atmospheric, reflecting painstaking effort. The prices were low. Only a few had a red dot indicating they were sold. I sensed that Shyh-Charng Lo was an artist who was barely making a living.

The Summer Song became a magical melody; when I played it beautiful women appeared out of nowhere and smiled fetchingly. Children loved to dance to it. *The Summer Song* had a compelling charisma and in the fall of the year, October first, on my birthday, I recorded it and burned a CD. I also wrote a letter to Shyh-Charng Lo telling him about *The Summer Song* and thanking him for his inspiration. On October 7, I took the CD and the letter down to Art Beatus Gallery to be delivered to the artist as a gift of appreciation.

That evening I had a dinner engagement in staid Point Grey. Being a hardscrabble East Vancouverite I rarely get over to Point Grey. The day was warm and overcast. I spent the afternoon prowling the neighbourhood, playing my harmonicas. At one point I sat on a memorial bench at the Point Grey United Church. I was facing the sidewalk playing a bluesy tune. An Asian man stopped, listened and smiled. It was Shyh-Charng Lo. I knew this because I remembered his photo in the gallery catalogue. I called out to him: "Are you Shyh-Charng Lo?"

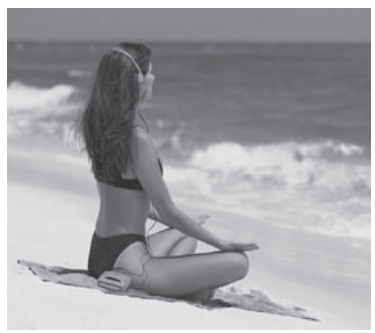
He was flabbergasted. "How do you know my name?" he gasped.

"Well," I replied, "I created a harmonica tune because of one of your paintings at the Art Beatus exhibit last summer. I would like to play it for you."

He walked over to me and his eyes brimmed with pleasure as I played *The Summer Song*. When I finished he said, "Do you know what day this is? It's my birthday!"

The Summer Song was now *The Birthday Song*. I marveled at the serendipity. Two artists had connected: both middle-aged, their birthdays a week apart (I am a year older) both immigrants (I am from the US and he is from Taiwan) and both struggling determinedly with their art. We clasped hands and said good-bye. I am sure he has never forgotten that moment and every October 7 on his birthday I imagine Shyh-Charng Lo playing his CD of *The Summer Song* and smiling.

Stewart Brinton is a writer of poetry and prose and also a skilled musician, the centerpiece of his life being the saxophone, which is his daily meditation. He will send you a free audio-copy of The Summer Song *if you email stewbaba@shaw.ca. Story Slam is held on the second Wednesday of every month at Our Town Café, 245 East Broadway at Kingsway. Please spread the word about this audience-judged competition for performed five-minute stories to comics, actors, writers, storytellers, incorrigible liars and raconteurs. The winning story is published here each month. Contact Johnny: 604-254-0355 or boltsoffiction@hotmail.com.*



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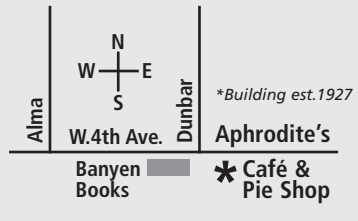

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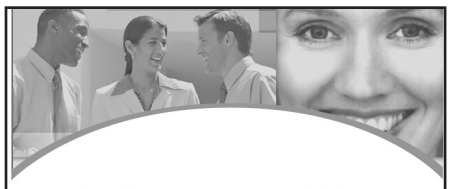

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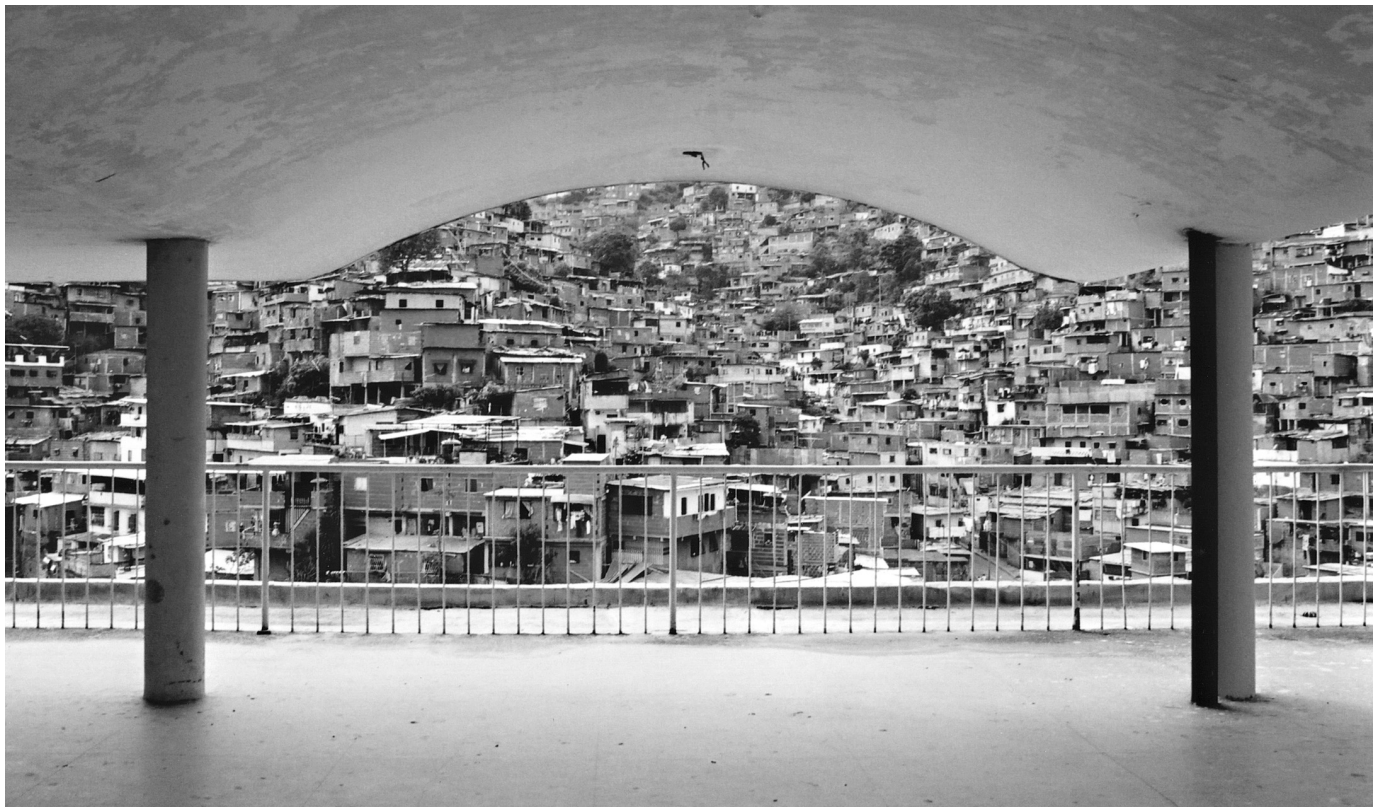

The new Caracas: A city shaped by collective community organizations, which have existed for decades.

Caracas – transformative collective community

HABITAT

by Sabine Bitter and Helmut Weber

Since the 1998 election of President Hugo Chavez, there has been a major shift in national politics in Venezuela, and Venezuelan society is undergoing a process of reconstruction made by the people. Building on Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* and his seminal concept that every society produces its own space through its own spatial practice, in the series of works entitled *Caracas, Hecho en Venezuela*, we emphasize processes of the production of the city by looking at specific sites and modes of production.

Venezuelan society is undergoing a process of reconstruction made by the people.

In Caracas, a city embedded into the global oil economy, yet with a history of radical politics, we witnessed forms of urbanism that are the engine of a greater social transformation. This transformative urbanism is both spatial and social, and in this city which is spatially divided by class, social conflicts are marked by territories.

The lines drawn by architecture, which delineate class struggle, are porous because formal and informal practices cut throughout this city of five million. Formal practices that pass through institutions, companies, and governmental structures are not the right of only the powerful, and informal practices, such as street vending and self-organized house construction on the city's hills, are not merely the cultural domain of the weak. The production of space is intertwined with both informal and formal practices. Spatial programs like urban and rural land reform, land titles, and urban agriculture are tied to healthcare and educational programs, which provide an infrastructure for informal practices and formalized social services for the country's impoverished.

Yet, as part of what Chavistas call the Bolivarian Process (or, commonly, "el processo"), these reforms and programs are not solely administered and executed from above by governmental structures, but are at the same time forcefully initiated from below by collective community organizations, which have existed for decades. The relationship between the historic modernist housing projects from the 1950s, designed by Venezuela's Paris-trained architect Carlos Raul Villanueva, and the current urban restructurings driven by the dynamic of formal and informal processes, are central to our research in Caracas.

CARACAS, HECHO EN VENEZUELA

In Caracas, a city spatially divided by class, social conflicts are marked by territories.

Working collaboratively for the past 10 years, we focussed on the field of architecture and urbanism, exploring the conditions of urban life in relation to the distribution of power. We investigated the possibility of visually interpreting and critically commenting on urban and architectural structures in terms of their potential for extensive social change. The exhibition is a result of our six-month urban research project, carried out in Caracas in 2003, in which we examined how architecture, urban structures, and entire territories in Caracas have been appropriated, "re-territorialized," and transformed by the people who live in them.

Caracas, Hecho en Venezuela runs until September 11 at the Charles H. Scott Gallery, Emily Carr Institute, 1399 Johnston Street in Vancouver. The exhibition includes photography, video, and billboard projects. A 48-page, full-colour artists' book, co-published with Revolver – Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, will accompany the exhibition. Gallery hours: Monday to Friday, noon to 5 pm and Saturday and Sunday, 10 am to 5 pm. Admission is free. Visit the Bitter/Weber website at www.lot.at

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doctors went on strike had already been acted out in British Columbia in the 1930s. The intense contests between the Liberals, Conservatives, citizens, the medical community and insurance companies over who would pay for medical services, and how, is a big and revealing chapter in BC's political history. The controversy over health care, with which we are still embroiled, was embraced by the 1937 BC referendum. It took place in the depths of the Depression, and was an integral part in the decades-long process of clarifying the issue and establishing public policy on paying the costs of people's medial services. When the ballots were tallied on June 1, 1937, some 116,223 British Columbians had voted for the Health Insurance Act, while 80,982 opposed it. A large majority had approved the health plan proposal, far in excess of the going rule that it only took 50 percent plus one to carry. At the same time, the Liberal government whose own legislation on health insurance had initiated the public debate was re-elected. This meant it had a double mandate to deal with the health insurance question, because the Liberals had explicitly pledged to honour the outcome of the balloting. Yet the re-elected government of Premier T. Dufferin Pattullo chose instead to wait, neither enforcing nor replacing the 1936 act for the public health insurance program. The overwhelming mandate the people had given the government to proceed was ignored. The Liberal premier of the day had changed his self-imposed rule. Citizens felt they had been used and abused.

By 1952 another issue British Columbians share with others across this vast northern transcontinental country, the problems of time zones and time systems, had generated so much controversy it could only be resolved at the ballot box. The choice between shifting to daylight saving for part of the year, or staying on standard time for all 12 months, pitted urban dwellers who liked daylight saving against rural folk who did not. Farmers claimed to be losing two hours working time per day. Desiring to resolve the controversy once and for all, the British Columbia government submitted a ballot question on the subject to voters, along with another ballot question on the still controversial liquor question, in conjunction with the provincial general election on June 12, 1952. Some 290,353 people voted in favour of daylight saving, and 231,008 voted against. Even as they reached the polling stations many citizens could still not make up their minds, evidenced by 20,828 voters rejecting their time question ballot. With a favourable vote, and the farmers having had their day in an open contest over the best public policy for the province as a whole, "fast time" was proclaimed to apply throughout British Columbia. In this, BC pointed the way again, and the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan subsequently held direct votes on a common plan for setting the clock. In all three provinces, the rule to determine the outcome was 50 percent plus one.

By 1991, British Columbia voters again went to the polls to cast ballots on issues that set them ahead of and apart from other parts of Canada – initiative and recall. The "initiative" is the legislated right of citizens to cause or initiate a referendum on an issue for which they can generate enough public support as shown by a petition signed by the required number of voters. The "recall," is triggered when a requisite number of voters sign a petition on a stated reason as to why their elected representative in the British Columbia Legislature should be recalled and a by-election take place for a replacement MLA. Both measures had been intrinsic parts of the populist direct democracy movements in Canada and the United States a century ago, and were revived in the early 1990s as a manifestation of citizen disillusionment with politics and disengagement from established party political processes. When Social Credit Premier Rita Johnston announced the two-question referendum, NDP leader Michael Harcourt said it was unnecessary because the government could simply introduce the legislation and get on with it. "Citizen initiatives and recall should have been incorporated in the Referendum Act that the Social Credit government passed last year," said Harcourt in September 1991. The NDP supported direct use of the legislature to enact changes to the provincial democratic system, according to the rule of a constitutional legislative democracy. The vote took place, however, and the governing rule in that arena, of course, was 50 percent plus one. Although the government itself was defeated, British Columbians were unequivocal about enhancing the democratic infrastructure of the province. In favour of recall were 1,058,137, against were 248,432, with 128,171 rejected ballots. Counting only the valid votes cast, 80.99 percent of the citizens approved recall. Of the valid votes cast for initiative, the second question, the number was even higher at 83 percent. During the election, Harcourt had indicated he would follow the results of the mandate from the people, not a radical idea for a party leader in a democratic society, and he did not change the rule. Following his election as premier, a committee of the legislature was given the mandate in 1992 to study the details and recommend specific legislative measures for initiative and recall. The provisions were duly enacted and are law today.

By 2002, another major ballot question, this time on aboriginal treaty rights in land claim negotiations, brought with it a lot of controversy and even a court challenge. (I remember it well because I was called by the Crown to give expert testimony about referendum law and British Columbia democratic practices and norms.) That referendum is still fresh in most people's memory, so we can skip the details, except to note that as exceptional as the whole matter was, nobody thought to change the 50 percent plus one rule because it was so deeply established.

So, why did BC face a new rule for a ballot question on modifying the way the electoral system works? The rule was changed by the Campbell government sponsoring an amendment to the Referendum Act and passing it into law in the legislature with its majority who are all members elected under a different electoral system than the one being proposed. Under the Charter in our Constitution, a law that curtails the rights and freedoms of citizens can only be subject "to such reasonable limits prescribed by law [in this case, the amendment to the BC Referendum Act to change the 50 percent plus one rule to the double 60 rule] as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society." When the courts interpret this, they look to the laws and norms of "a free and democratic society." British Columbia as a free and democratic society for more than a century has conducted referendums on the legal requirement of 50 percent plus one being the threshold for approval. The democratic right of British Columbians to vote in referendums is granted by statute enacted by the legislature in accordance with the constitution of the province. Once that right is granted by law, even though it is not one of the explicitly enumerated democratic rights in the Charter, it does exist as a right that can only be subject to "such reasonable limits as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society." To argue otherwise is to change the rule about changing the rules. A court ruling in response to a citizen-based challenge to the double 60 rule is not the next thing Premier Campbell would hope to see, but the prospect is not unimaginable.

It needn't be this way. In British Columbia the process involving the Citizens' Assembly deliberately studying voting methods followed by the May 17

continued on page 14

Under the Charter in our Constitution, a law that curtails the rights and freedoms of citizens can only be subject "to such reasonable limits prescribed by law [in this case, the amendment to the BC Referendum Act to change the 50 percent plus one rule to the double 60 rule] as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society."

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Bodily emotion

THE POWER OF NOW

by Eckhart Tolle

I was going to ask: What about positive emotions such as love and joy?

They are inseparable from your natural state of inner connectedness with Being. Glimpses of love and joy or brief moments of deep peace are possible whenever a gap occurs in the stream of thought. For most people, such gaps happen rarely and only accidentally, in moments when the mind is rendered "speechless," sometimes triggered by great beauty, extreme physical exertion, or even great danger. Suddenly, there is inner stillness. And within that stillness there is a subtle but intense joy, there is love, there is peace.

Real love doesn't make you suffer. How could it? It doesn't suddenly turn into hate, nor does real joy turn into pain.

Usually, such moments are short-lived, as the mind quickly resumes its noise-making activity that we call thinking. Love, joy, and peace cannot flourish until you have freed yourself from mind dominance. But they are not what I would call emotions. They lie beyond the emotions, on a much deeper level. So you need to become fully conscious of your emotions and be able to feel them before you can feel that which lies beyond them. Emotion literally means "disturbance." The word comes from the Latin emovere, meaning "to disturb."

Love, joy, and peace are deep states of Being or rather three aspects of the state of inner connectedness with Being. As such, they have no opposite. This is because they arise from beyond the mind. Emotions, on the other hand, being part of the dualistic mind, are subject to the law of opposites. This simply means that you cannot have good without bad. So in the unenlightened, mind-identified condition, what is sometimes wrongly called joy is the usually short-lived pleasure side of the continuously alternating pain/pleasure cycle. Pleasure is always derived from something outside you, whereas joy arises from within. The very thing that gives you pleasure today will give you pain tomorrow, or it will leave you, so its absence will give you pain. And what is often referred to as love may be pleasurable and exciting for a while, but it is an addictive clinging, an extremely needy condition that can turn into its opposite at the flick of a switch. Many "love" relationships, after the initial euphoria has passed, actually oscillate between "love" and hate, attraction and attack.

Even within a "normal" addictive relationship, there can be moments when the presence of something more genuine, something incorruptible, can be felt

Real love doesn't make you suffer. How could it? It doesn't suddenly turn into hate, nor does real joy turn into pain. As I said, even before you are enlightened – before you have freed yourself from your mind – you may get glimpses of true joy, true love, or of a deep inner peace, still but vibrantly alive. These are aspects of your true nature, which is usually obscured by the mind. Even within a "normal" addictive relationship, there can be moments when the presence of something more genuine, something incorruptible, can be felt. But they will only be glimpses, soon to be covered up again through mind interference. It may then seem that you had something very precious and lost it, or your mind may convince you that it was all an illusion anyway. The truth is that it wasn't an illusion, and you cannot lose it. It is part of your natural state, which can be obscured but can never be destroyed by the mind. Even when the sky is heavily overcast, the sun hasn't disappeared. It's still there on the other side of the clouds.

Excerpted from The Power of Now *by Eckhart Tolle, $14 US, $15.75 Canada, trade paperback, published by New World Library and Namaste Publishing. Available at local and online bookstores.*
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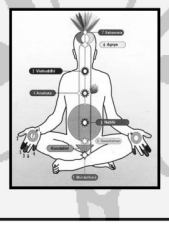

The Real Kundalini Yoga

The waking dream

UNIVERSE WITHIN *by Gwen Randall-Young*

Men are disturbed not by things that happen, but by their opinions of the things that happen.

– Epictetus (55-135)

Epictetus wrote those words such a long, long time ago, and we are still trying to really grasp the truth of this concept.

Imagine you are dreaming a bad dream, and while in the dream you are frightened or frustrated, but a part of you knows it is a dream, so does not really worry. Yet, you keep slipping back into the dream, forgetting it is a dream, and reacting emotionally as though the dream events are really happening to you.

Life is a little like that. On one level we know the truth of what Epictetus has said, and yet we still get drawn into the "dream" of ego perception, believing it is the external events that have disturbed us. Ego has all kinds of reactions including anger, frustration, feelings of being victimized, bitterness, resentment, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem.

Following on the heels of these reactions may be reactionary behaviours. They may be directed outwards to the one(s) whom we believed caused the problem, and may take the form of confrontation, retaliation, withdrawal, or attempts to control others or the situation. Conversely, the reactions may be directed inwards towards the self, and may include self-deprecation, or attempts to comfort or numb the feelings, such as using prescription or recreational drugs, alcohol, over-eating, over-spending, promiscuity and other self-destructive behaviours.

In the night dream, there are no external adversaries. The drama playing itself out is between different aspects of our psyche, even if the dream seems to be about others. We take ownership of our dream, and (hopefully) do not go about confronting others the next day about what they did in our dream the night before.

This is because we do not take the dream personally, and further, because we know that we scripted the whole thing. We may not fully realize that, as we say I "had" a dream, rather than I "made" a dream, but deep down, our subconscious created the cast and the script.

The same thing happens in waking life, albeit somewhat differently. True, events actually happen, and people really do say things. However, it is our consciousness and our perceptions that create the drama around such events.

For example, a vehicle crosses over into your lane, causing you to brake to avoid a collision. Commonly, when this happens, the thought is that we have been "cut off." An angry reaction may follow, as though the driver purposely committed an act of aggression against us. In truth, the other driver may not have shoulder checked, and may have been unaware that you were there. The act may have been careless, to be sure, but with nothing personal intended. The more personally we take it, however, the stronger will be our reaction.

If we are being blamed or attacked unfairly, we still need not take it personally, for then it is really not so much about us as what is going on in the other person's "dream" about us.

The same is true with a job loss, or the ending of a relationship. Even if, in these events, we were personally attacked or blamed, we still have a choice about the opinion we hold of the event. If there is any truth in what we are being told, we can choose to take that learning and move on. If we are being blamed or attacked unfairly, we still need not take it personally, for then it is really not so much about us as what is going on in the other person's "dream" about us.

The "peaceful warrior" is the one who never forgets that we are dreaming our reality. He/she can watch events play themselves out, but maintain contact with the "wise observer" part of his/her being. The peaceful warrior remembers that everyone is playing out their script, and it may not coincide with ours. When it does not, we bless the other, and move on.

The peaceful warrior remembers that everyone is playing out their script, and it may not coincide with ours.

In extreme cases, we may have to file a wrongful dismissal suit on the way out, sue for divorce, or lay charges. A peaceful warrior is not a wuss. Still, we can do it without the drama, and without taking it personally. We can do it without feeling victimized, or concluding that the world is unfair.

If we choose to have the opinion that life provides endless opportunities for remaining in a place of integrity, inner peace and equanimity, regardless of what happens, and that the greater the challenges, the deeper the wisdom we are required to access – then what is there to be disturbed about?

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For information about Dancing Soul: The Voice of Spirit Evolving, *or her other books, tapes or new healing CDs go to www.gwen.ca or gwendall@shaw.ca*

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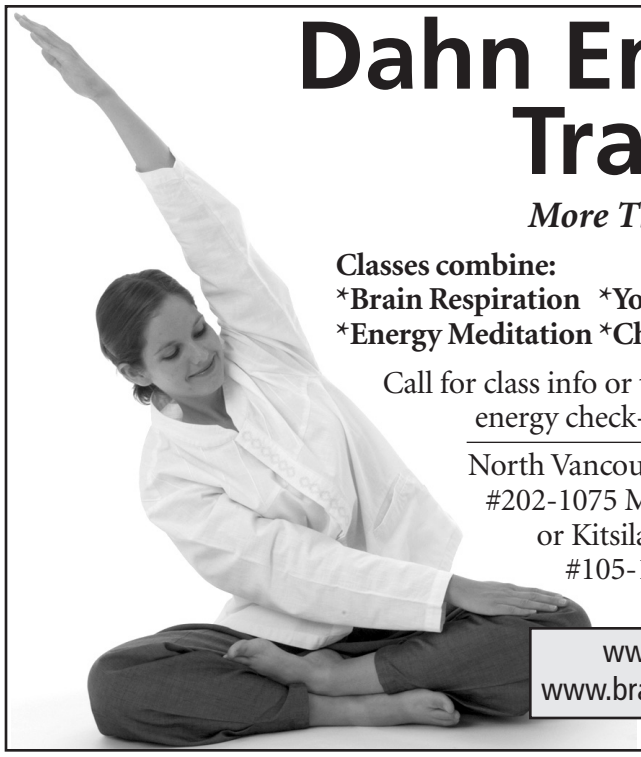

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continued from page 11

ballot question on the single transferable vote it recommended was launched by Gordon Campbell. His commitment given in the prior election was duly honoured during his first mandate. As Nick Loenen, a persistent British Columbia advocate for proportional representation, noted more than a year ago, "Campbell was not pushed from behind. On this issue he led his party, cabinet and caucus. His achievement is remarkable."

That's an understatement. Across Canada other premiers and provinces have been following Premier Campbell's example and British Columbia's lead. In Ontario, Premier Dalton McGuinty's plan for "democratic renewal" includes a citizens' assembly on electoral system change followed by a referendum. This is a direct copy from Premier Campbell, and on June 14 Ontario's legislature enacted a law to set this process in operation. On Prince Edward Island, Premier Pat Binns initiated a process for electoral reform that will culminate in a referendum this year. In New Brunswick, Premier Bernard Lord is following suit. Ottawa and Quebec are also on the move, in the same direction. All eyes have been on BC. They still are – especially because the province that initiated the current Canada-wide surge in democratic renewal is also, oddly, home of the double 60 rule.

On June 6, Fair Vote Canada president Wayne Smith urged New Brunswick's Premier Bernard Lord, who'd followed Gordon Campbell's lead and is proceeding with a referendum on a mixed-member proportional voting system, to let 50 percent plus one decide the outcome. Said Smith: "The government of British Columbia has put itself in an embarrassing position by having an unprecedented double super-majority threshold for their recent referendum on electoral reform." The double refers to the need for a majority of constituencies to also approve, which overwhelmingly happened. BC-STV was endorsed by a majority of voters in all regions of the province, 77 of the 79 ridings.

The "BC mistake" of the double 60 rule required to carry the referendum will almost certainly be avoided elsewhere. Nobody else has ever run a referendum except on 50 percent plus one, and why would they change?

Why, indeed, did Gordon Campbell change the rule? The premier had to strike a deal with his cabinet and caucus to get support originally for his electoral reform proposal – amendment of the province's Referendum Act to require double 60 approval for simply changing an electoral system. Last month's voting perversely showed that while 47 percent of the popular vote was enough to form a government, 57 percent was not enough to approve a change in the way the ballots get counted – at least once you've changed the rule about changing the rules. By all other standards, including the still operational provisions of the BC Referendum Act on any question other than the electoral system for MLAs, the unchanged rule remains 50 percent plus one.

STV referen-dim

To repeat, the May 17 vote needing 60 percent voter approval is a sharp contrast to earlier BC referendums on allowing women the right to vote (1916), a government health insurance plan (1937), Prohibition (1909, 1916, 1920, 1924 and 1952), daylight saving time (1952), recall and initiative (1991) and aboriginal treaty rights in land claim negotiations (2002). Those ballot questions only needed 50 percent plus one for approval. It's the norm, both in BC and elsewhere. Newfoundland's referendum in 1948 on joining Canada, or Quebec's referendums in 1980 and 1995 on separating from Canada, needed only 50 percent plus one approval. The Canada-wide referendums on prohibition of liquor (1898), military conscription in wartime (1942), and the Charlottetown Accord constitutional package (1992), were each determined with simple majorities, not a 60 percent threshold, although the questions posed to voters were of profound consequence.

No other province or country imposes a 60 percent approval requirement for a referendum on electoral reform. PEI's coming referendum on electoral reform will entail a simple majority, which will be the case in Ontario and New Brunswick as their premiers learn from Gordon Campbell's predicament and seek to avoid the BC mistake. New Zealand adopted electoral reform when its referendum passed with 54 percent. Ireland and Italy twice conducted electoral reform referendums requiring only the norm of a simple majority. The list is long.

Just how perverse the British Columbia mistake is comes across in the numbers: while 47 percent of the popular vote was enough to form a government, 57 percent was not enough to approve a change in the way the ballots get counted. Political conditions today have changed from the time Gordon Campbell first exercised leadership, stepping out in front on this issue and having to bring along a reluctant caucus. The BC experience, copied elsewhere, has shown in the intervening years just how ripe electoral reform is for the picking. This was less evident to most politicians a few years ago when caution gave birth to the unprecedented double 60 rule.

Politically, the double 60 rule has become a python tightening around the government. It squeezes legitimacy from the very Campbell government, ensconced in Victoria with a significantly lower popular vote, that sponsored it. It chokes off the electoral reform process which was the child of that same government. The art of politics practised by leaders involves knowing when to change with changed times. The political risk faced now by Premier Campbell comes not from making a change in the electoral system, but rather from failing to make it.

Clearly Gordon Campbell understood the antiquated nature of the first-past-the-post system by launching the process that considered alternatives and gave British Columbians a ballot choice to retain the present system or move to more proportional representation in the legislature. Electors in British Columbia last month became the envy of other Canadians who feel frustrated by an electoral system that produces legislatures unreflective of the way we vote.

Just as French and Dutch voters in recent referendums on a new European Constitution sent a broad signal by voting to reject the proposal, British Columbians sent a clear (but in this case positive) signal to the rest of Canada where referendums are pending or proposed for revamping the electoral system. The strong popular support of BC voters for electoral reform has impact far beyond the province's borders.

The present paradox is that the process started by the Campbell government has hit this odd snag of its own creation – the double 60 rule. That provision is no barrier to action, however. While the Referendum Act would have made it mandatory for the government to bring in legislation creating the single transferable voting system if just 3 percent more had voted for the measure, absolutely nothing prevents the government from doing so now of its own volition.

Gordon Campbell started this current phase of democratic renewal with his speech to the Liberal policy convention in Kelowna on April 17, 1999. He will likely wish to see this long-needed reform through to completion. He certainly has solid arguments and impressive historical precedents on his side, bolstered by his own prior leadership on the issue. As with any non-binding plebiscite (which in law is what most Canadian events of direct democracy have been, rather than legally binding referendums) the premier can be guided by the results of May 17, even though he doesn't have to follow through on them.

Perhaps what is strongly felt in British Columbia, even more than an affinity to BC-STV or any other particular model, is the desire to move to a voting system that will see the membership in the legislature more closely mirror the way voters actually supported candidates and parties at the ballot boxes. That, as Gordon Campbell grasped from the start, would bring us Canadians closer, whether in British Columbia or other parts of Canada following the inspired West Coast lead, to requalifying ourselves as a self-governing democracy.

www.fairvote.ca

http://citizensassembly.bc.ca/resources/flash/bc-stv-full.swf

www.positiveeffect.ca

J. Patrick Boyer, QC, former MP, lawyer and university professor, is author of three books on direct democracy in Canada: Law-Making by the People, Direct Democracy in Canada, *and* The People's Mandate. *His new book on this subject,* Forcing Choice, *to be published this fall by Canadian Shield Books, will explore British Columbia's rich experience with referendums and political choice. patrickboyer@sympatico.ca*

British memo on Iraq more damning of US than ever

by Paul Loeb

It's bad enough that the Bush administration had so little international support for the Iraqi war that its "coalition of the willing" meant the US, Britain, and the equivalent of a child's imaginary friends. It's even worse that, as the British Downing Street memo confirms, it had so little evidence of real threats that it knew from the start that it was going to have to manufacture excuses to go to war. What's more damning still is that it effectively began this war even before the congressional vote.

With Congressman John Conyers holding hearings, the media is finally starting to cover the Downing Street memo. This transcript of a July 23, 2002 British prime minister's meeting, whose legitimacy the British government confirms, details their response to the Bush administration's intention to go to war against Iraq, no matter how Saddam Hussein responded, and even while claiming they were still seeking peaceful solutions. "It seemed clear that Bush had made up his mind to take military action, even if the timing was not yet decided," states the document. "But the case was thin. Saddam was not threatening his neighbours, and his WMD capability was less than that of Libya, North Korea or Iran." As the document states, "the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy."

The document is damning, particularly coupled with the testimony of former Bush ghost-writer Mickey Herskowitz (www.commondreams.org/headlines04/1028-01.htm) that Bush was talking about invading Iraq as early as 1999. But it's even more disturbing as we start learning that this administration began actively fighting the Iraq war well in advance of the March 2003 official attack – before both the October 2002 US Congressional authorization and the November United Nations resolution requiring that Saddam Hussein open the country up to inspectors.

I follow Iraq pretty closely, but was taken aback when Charlie Clements, now head of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, described driving in Iraq months before the war "and a building would just explode, hit by a missile from 30,000 feet –'What is that building?' " Clements would ask. " 'Oh, that's a telephone exchange.' " Later, at a conference at Nevada's Nellis Air Force Base, Clements heard a US general boast "that he began taking out assets that could help in resisting an invasion at least six months before war was declared."

> ***This transcript...details their response to the Bush administration's intention to go to war against Iraq, no matter how Saddam Hussein responded...***

Earlier this month, Jeremy Scahill wrote a powerful piece (www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-1660300,00.html) on the website of The Nation, describing a huge air assault in September 2002. "Approximately 100 US and British planes flew from Kuwait into Iraqi airspace," Scahill writes. "At least seven types of aircraft were part of this massive operation, including US F-15 Strike Eagles and Royal Air Force Tornado ground-attack planes. They dropped precision-guided munitions on Saddam Hussein's major western air-defence facility, clearing the path for special forces helicopters that lay in wait in Jordan. Earlier attacks had been carried out against Iraqi command and control centres, radar detection systems, Revolutionary Guard units, communication centres and mobile air-defence systems. The Pentagon's goal was clear: Destroy Iraq's ability to resist."

Why aren't we talking about this? As Scahill points out, this was a month before the Congressional vote, and two before the UN resolution. Supposedly part of enforcing "no fly zones," the bombings were actually systematic assaults on Iraq's capacity to defend itself. The US had never declared war. Bush had no authorization, not even a fig leaf. He was simply attacking another nation because he'd decided to do so. This preemptive war preempted Congress, as well as international law.

Most Americans don't know these pre-war attacks ever happened. There was little coverage at the time, and there's been little since. The bombings that destroyed Iraq's air defences were under the radar for both the American media and American citizens.

If coverage of the Downing Street memo continues to increase, I suspect the administration will try to dismiss it as mere diplomatic talk, just inside baseball. But they weren't just manipulating intelligence so they could attack no matter how Saddam Hussein responded. They weren't only bribing would-be allies into participation. They were fighting a war they'd planned long before. They just didn't bother to tell the American public.

The above is from The San Francisco Chronicle. *Paul Loeb is author of* The Impossible Will Take a Little While: A Citizen's Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear *(Basic Books), named the number three political book of 2004 by the History Channel and American Book Association www.theimpossible.org/ www.soulofacitizen.org/newimp/impindex.htm/ You can read more about the Downing Street memo at www.afterdowningstreet.org*

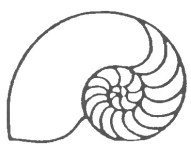
USA BUILDS UP FOR INVASION OF IRAN NEXT

In 2002, Scott Ritter, a former top UN weapons inspector in Iraq (1991-1998), came to Vancouver to speak out against the invasion of Iraq. In an article found online at www.theinformationclearinghouse.info he speaks out again.

What Paul Loeb describes in the article here is the same thing now beginning to happen in Iran.

Says Scott: "This timeline of events has ramifications that go beyond historical trivia or political investigation into the events of the past. It represents a record of precedent on the part of the Bush administration, which must be acknowledged when considering the ongoing events regarding US-Iran relations. As was the case with Iraq pre-March 2003, the Bush administration today speaks of 'diplomacy' and a desire for a 'peaceful' resolution to the Iranian question. But the facts speak of another agenda, that of war and the forceful removal of the theocratic regime, currently wielding the reigns of power in Tehran."

He goes on to outline US military preparations in nearby Azerbaijan for intelligence gathering, direct action and the mobilization of indigenous opposition to the mullahs in Tehran. From Azerbaijan, the US military is capable of much closer air strikes and much shorter land routes for its next invasion. It's fine that we are aware of the ongoing tragedy in Iraq, but while we dwell on the post-war occupation there, many are missing out on the next war crime about to be repeated by the Bush administration in Iran.



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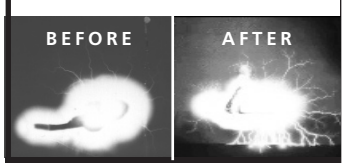

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CODEX ALIMENTARIUS USED TO CONTROL SUPPLEMENTS WORLDWIDE

by Dr. Carolyn Dean

In my book, *Death by Modern Medicine*, using the allopathic medical industry's own official reports, I document how 784,000 people die every year in the American medical system while following doctors' orders in a highly-regulated allopathic system. The proof that dietary supplements are safe and work as expected is evidenced everywhere. Studies conducted all over the world have shown that supplements are actually safer than food, and there is simply no hard evidence to show there is any risk factor worthy of discussion, much less needing universal "risk assessment." Yet, the US delegation, along with its Big Pharma backers are bound and determined that Codex force "risk analysis assessments" upon the American dietary supplement industry so they can bypass the expressed will of the American people.

The real reason for promotion of "risk assessment" is based on two agendas: First, to be able to strip the over-the-counter marketplace of everything but low quality, low dose-level products that won't do much to support or improve health. And secondly, to set up the framework to allow Big Pharma to take over the supplement market as a new form of drugs where prices can be jacked up outrageously and doled out by doctors for a fee.

The US delegation to Codex has just issued a formal written statement to the Codex Alimentarius Commission that the United States, during the July 4-9, 2005 meeting in Rome, will support compulsory rules created by this international organization directly overruling US law regarding access to vitamins. The US law that is about to be vanquished is the Dietary Supplement, Health and Education Act of 1994. Codex is a joint venture between the United Nation's World Health Organization and Food and Agriculture Organization. (WHO/FAO) The World Trade Organization (WTO) has already stated that it will enforce Codex "guidelines" as the world standard for trade in dietary supplements. This will mean that gradually, pill-by-pill, our access to the dietary supplements we depend on will disappear.

For those not familiar with the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994, it was passed because two and a half million ordinary citizens wanted to make sure that dietary supplements, such as herbs, vitamins, minerals, and other food-based supplements, could stay on the over-the-counter market. Movement to create this law, known as DSHEA, started when a 1992 FDA task force published a report announcing the FDA's desire to remove these products from the shelves as they represented a "disincentive for patented drug research."

Immediately following this announcement, millions of Americans learned how famed vitamin doctor Jonathan Wright's patient-filled medical office was raided the same month by nearly two dozen gun-toting, flak-jacketed, FDA agents in the name of regulating supplements. Battering down an unlocked office door, these agents, backed by burly sheriff's department deputies, lined up staff and patients against the wall, pulled IVs from patients arms in the middle of treatments, confiscated patient records, and took the hard drive from the office computer, all because Dr. Jonathan Wright was using nutritional supplements to heal very sick people who could not get help from standard allopathic medical care.

As the story developed, it turned out that this Gestapo-style raid was standard operating procedure for the FDA, and as the general public became aware of just how many doctors' offices, manufacturing companies, distributors, and health food stores had been assaulted by similar raids, the horror of all this forged a mighty health freedom army that resulted in unanimous passage of DSHEA.

The idea of the law was two-fold:

1. DSHEA was to make a clear distinction between food, which is considered generally safe and did not need to have permission from the FDA to be allowed on the market, and drugs, which are generally toxic, potentially deadly, and in need of lengthy evaluation before they were available to the public under prescription from a doctor.

2. DSHEA provides the FDA with plenty of legal authority to remove herbs or dietary supplements from the market, providing the agency has plenty of real evidence of real harm to the public. The FDA also has the authority to limit the amount of a supplement to low levels if the agency has plenty of real evidence to prove higher levels are actually dangerous.

The FDA and its Big Pharma backers have never liked DSHEA because these products and the related natural healing arts services often related to them are putting the allopathic drug/surgical/chemical and medical industry to shame. Act now to protect your basic right to maintain your health. Without health you have no freedom.

Dr. Carolyn Dean is a medical doctor, naturopathic doctor, herbalist, acupuncturist, nutritionist, as well as a health activist for health freedom as president of Friends of Freedom International. Dr. Dean is the author of over a dozen health books, the latest is Death By Modern Medicine. *For further information or to sign up for free email alerts contact www.friendsoffreedominternational.org or www.deathbymodernmedicine.com*

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Why organic?

ON THE GARDEN PATH

by Carolyn Herriot

On the Garden Path *began a year ago with* Greetings From the Garden Path, *a weekly email newsletter sent to customers of The Garden Path Organic Plant Nursery in Victoria. Each week Carolyn wrote about what she was doing in the garden, the orchard, the greenhouse, with seed saving and soil building, with the intention of helping gardeners of all levels realize they can have the most healthy, productive and beautiful garden without resorting to substances harmful to humans, animals, wildlife, plants, worms or the myriad of soil-dwelling organisms.*

I'm an old-fashioned girl at heart, often wishing I could turn the clock back to slower and saner times. I especially feel this when it comes to the modern practices of farming and gardening. That's because so many farmers and gardeners have come to rely on huge inputs of synthetic chemical substances - herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers, which we now know cause havoc to the environment, to our health and to the delicate web of soil life.

It's strange to think that only 70 years ago people relied on small-scale family farms, local markets and home gardens for fresh fruits, vegetables and livestock. The Victorians were judged at dinner parties for their prowess in the kitchen garden, where both the food served and the decorative flowers were held in great esteem. Nutritious vegetables, herbs, fruits and flowers were produced without the inputs of synthetic chemicals that are depended upon today. Natural source materials in excess, such as horse and cow manure, were the mainstay of small-scale agriculture then.

When I started my first garden maintenance business, Forget-Me-Not Gardening Services, I was shocked to discover customers' sheds and garages full of toxic chemical products with names such as diazinon, 2,4-D, methoxychlor, malathion, benomyl and mecoprop. I was expected to use these products routinely throughout the year, and was required to pass a pesticide applicator licence test just to be a gardener. The belief was that without these products a garden could not thrive. This is what initially led me to gardening organically, and then to my passion for heritage plants and historic gardening practices.

Modern farming also depends on such products to maximize yields for greater profits. It is not focused on soil health, plant diversity, seed saving or the protection of wildlife. It is only recently that the detrimental impacts of modern farming have even been acknowledged. Referred to as agribusiness, modern farming is clearly disconnected from the natural cycles of life. Seasonal spraying of millions of gallons of pesticides over fields, into soil and onto food leaves me with a feeling of deep despair. This pales in comparison to the dread I feel about the genetic manipulation of plant genes and even worse, the exchange of genetic material between species from different kingdoms, now routine in the biotechnology of farming. Pandora's box has been opened, and there's no going back now, as these human-created plant mutants have already cross fertilized with wild plants of the same species.

After millennia of miraculous evolution surely Mother Nature knows best? Hers is a power and creation worthy of utmost respect, but this power is not respected by our ceaseless drive to exploit, control and replicate the mystical powers of nature. It is with pure wonder, humility and boundless joy that, as an organic gardener, I try my best to understand and co-create with Mother Nature, not work against her.

Diversity rules in nature. Whether it comes to plants, animals, insects or microbes, or the elements of rock, water and air, all exist in exquisite and vital interdependent relationships with one another. When I interplant vegetables with flowers, herbs and small fruits, plants that attract pollinators and beneficial insects, all co-exist in perfect balance, taking care of pesky problems as they arise. I love knowing that the native bees, butterflies, hoverflies and parasitic wasps flitting about my garden are keeping everything in harmony and balance. My role is only to attract them and encourage them to stick around by providing drinking water and plants to feed them.

It is with pure wonder, humility and boundless joy that, as an organic gardener, I try my best to understand and co-create with Mother Nature, not work against her.

Number one in my garden is feeding the soil, which nurtures the myriad of micro-organisms that dwell in it. It's all about the microbes, responsible for breaking organic matter down into humus, and for making nutrients available to plants. I spend the dormant season, November to March, adding natural amendments to the garden, so I can grow healthy plants resilient to pests and diseases. This means I rarely spend time dealing with pesky problems, and have more time to enjoy my beautiful garden. My happiest times are spent hauling trailer loads of manure or buckets of seaweed. Whoever said "the best things in life are free" was so right!

From A Year on the Garden Path, A 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide *by Carolyn Herriot. $29.95. Earthfuture Publications, Victoria, BC. Available from Banyen Books and Duthie Books or www.earthfuture.com/gardenpath*

Carolyn will be doing a book signing at the first Organic Island Festival *in Victoria, detail at www.organicislands.ca and on page 18 of this issue of Common Ground.*

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Guardians of biodiversity

THE ORGANIC WAY

by Marya Skrypiczajko

There is no question the biodiversity of Earth is in decline. Environmentalists and nature-lovers everywhere recognize the urgent need to reverse this trend. Defined as the variety and complexity of life on Earth or within a given habitat at the gene, species and eco-system level, biodiversity is crucial on socio-cultural and economic levels, as well as environmental.

Unfortunately, government policy worldwide has not addressed the preservation of biological diversity in the most efficient manner. Initiatives to maintain biodiversity have focused on establishing protected areas, yet these areas cover a much smaller percentage of the Earth than do agricultural areas – 10 percent versus almost 40 percent. Given that so much of the Earth is used for agricultural purposes, a large percentage of species must come into contact with these areas, and thus agricultural land management has a great effect on the preservation or destruction of biodiversity.

Since WW II, the use of chemicals in agriculture and the move from mixed farming to monoculture have had a negative impact on biodiversity. In Europe, a study by BirdLife International linked population declines of over a third of species to changes in this sort of land use.

But it does not have to be this way; proper planning can reconcile human activities with the goals of biodiversity. On an agricultural level, the stewardship of biodiversity naturally falls to the organic farmers whose holistic farming practices embrace biodiversity for both philosophical and practical reasons.

The relationship between organic farmers and biodiversity is symbiotic; organic farmers both use and preserve biodiversity by understanding the natural capacity of plants, animals and the landscape. Many farmers will leave some of their land wild to preserve the indigenous forest, wetlands or grasslands which in turn provide food and habitat to diverse species that are beneficial to adjacent farmland as predators of pests or plant pollinators.

Thus, instead of applying chemical insecticides that kill all species rather than simply the few they are intended to eradicate, the arthropods, insects, birds and reptiles living nearby can feed on plant pests. As well, organic farmers may grow diverse plants, sometimes in specific combinations, to keep certain pests at bay.

Of course, some pests still do make it onto the crops and organic farmers then use natural processes, such as picking potato bugs off plants by hand, to take care of these problems. Similarly, organic farmers do not spray herbicides allowing weeds to grow and flower, thus inviting pollinators, such as bees, butterflies and beetles, into the garden. Unwanted weeds are then pulled by hand. This reliance on natural control methods maintains biodiversity at the same time as not allowing pest species resistant to the chemical sprays to flourish.

Organic farmers also work to create healthy soil by mixing in compost, animal and green manure, by regularly aerating the soil and by crop rotation. This process develops soil that naturally deters disease and pests and that is structurally stronger to prevent erosion. As well, they plant seeds adapted to the local climate and resistant to local diseases.

Studies have shown that compared with conventional farms, organic farms have more diverse and greater numbers of wildlife species. They have five times as many wild plants and 57 percent more species, 25 percent more birds, up to five times as many spiders and insects, and a much greater variety of planted crops.

Considering the successes of biodiversity within organic farming and the cost-effectiveness of it in maintaining biological diversity, the link should be reflected in government policy worldwide.

Unfortunately, agriculture and environmental preservation are usually considered separately at government levels. Very few governments promote organic agriculture and fewer still tie it to biodiversity. Some European countries are exceptions; in Sweden biodiversity is a certification requirement for organic farms, in England organic farmers receive financial credits for maintaining wild hedgerows, and in Italy biodiversity in agricultural tourism businesses is rewarded with tax breaks.

Governments could also provide farmers with monetary compensation for the loss of production area due to maintaining wild areas of land, they could fund educational programs on the ecological services nature provides, and they could promote the role of organic farming in the preservation of biodiversity to a larger audience.

Finally, they should not leave the onus on organic farmers alone. These policies should also apply to all landowners, conventional farmers, factories, office buildings, hotels, resorts, fishery waters, forestry lands and municipal parks.

Ultimately, the diversity of the landscape and wildlife benefits us on many levels. The beauty and integrity of the planet is maintained, the agricultural economy is more stable in times of natural crises, and the appeal of the natural landscape provides greater tourism appeal, thus benefiting local economies.

Marya is the author of BC the Organic Way. *www.bctheorganicway.com*

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Food and fitness for sexy seniors

NUTRISPEAK

by Vesanto Melina MS, RD

Life begins after your first half century. For many of us, age 50 is not the end of the road; it's the beginning. If you can relate to this, consider what new ventures you have undertaken since you turned 50, 60, or 70. I know a number of women who are having the best sex ever at this stage of life. They have linked up with wonderful partners in creative ways such as internet dating, working out at the gym, joining volunteer groups, getting out to entirely new environments, or by enlisting the support of friends.

A fun-filled and inspiring new book is Senior Fitness by Ruth Heidrich, PhD (Lantern Books, 2005, available at Banyen and other bookstores). This particular Dr. Ruth, who divides her time between White Rock, BC and Honolulu is an inspiration in herself; she has held three world records for her age group at the Cooper Clinic in Dallas and has won eight gold medals in the Senior Olympics. Ruth had breast cancer at age 47, made some life style changes, and now has been cancer free for over two decades.

Ruth makes the point that the top killers of Canadians are to a great extent preventable by changes in our diet and exercise habits. Even impotence can be diet related, as a reduction in blood flow to the penis, common in men who have hardening of the arteries, poses distinct challenges when it comes to sex. Use of drugs including tobacco and alcohol makes matters worse. Being put on pharmaceutical drugs is the band-aid approach, not a cure for the underlying problems. Clearing the arteries, which can be done by a clean diet, exercise and smoke-free lifestyle, is a potent solution. Many women sail through menopause, barely noticing the change and then proceed smoothly without a reliance on hormones such as horse estrogen. New research is exploring the gentler effects of similar plant estrogens derived from flax.

In my own experience, making exercise a regular habit has proven benefits. At age 50 I headed off for a 17,000 foot pass in the Himalayas with a few friends. At 60, I began annual participation in triathlons. Last year when my car died, I decided not to replace it, and now use a bike. Though vegan, I make sure my calcium intake meets recommended intakes, and my bone density is holding its own. Ruth has actually shown improved bone density since age 50, but she is a master athlete whereas I just potter along happily for an hour a day of some sort of exercise, mainly weight bearing.

Many of us find that as we get older, we get fatter, at the rate of a pound or two a year. How do we keep our weight in check? Plenty of options are advertised, though most are doomed to failure. Recorded attempts at dieting began a thousand years ago when William the Conqueror found he could no longer ride his horse because he was too fat. He decided to try a fluid diet and stayed in bed drinking alcoholic beverages instead of eating food. His attempts met with some success, as he was eventually able to get back on his horse. However, success was mixed because within the year, he fell off his horse and died.

In my own experience, making exercise a regular habit has proven benefits. At age 50 I headed off for a 17,000 foot pass in the Himalayas with a few friends. At 60, I began annual participation in triathlons. Last year when my car died, I decided not to replace it, and now use a bike. Though vegan, I make sure my calcium intake meets recommended intakes, and my bone density is holding its own

A better choice is to center your meals on simple, natural plant foods, plenty of them raw. Here is Ruth's recipe for health.

Recipe for health

Head for a farmer's market, choose organic produce, wash it, cut it up and enjoy it. (Keep water and a picnic kit in your car.) Run, or power walk, to a nearby berry patch. Eat the seeds in grapes, citrus, and watermelons. Gorge on strawberries straight up. It isn't necessary, or even beneficial, to make them into strawberry shortcake. Drink plenty of water. Ensure a reliable source of vitamin B12. Instead of your morning coffee, have a tablespoon of organic blackstrap molasses in hot water. For breakfast, lunch, supper and snacks, choose fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds that you enjoy plus mixed greens, tomatoes, carrots, broccoli, cucumber, kale, bell peppers, fresh salsa, avocado, kiwi, mangos, figs, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, walnuts and ground flaxseed.

Vesanto Melina is a registered dietitian and author based near Fort Langley. She is co-author of Becoming Vegetarian, Becoming Vegan, Raising Vegetarian Children, *and the* Food Allergy Survival Guide. *For personal consultations call 604-888-8325 (clinic) or 604-882-6782 (home office), www.nutrispeak.com*

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When the gas runs out

EARTHFUTURE.COM

by Guy Dauncey

It's not fun being cold. Your teeth chatter, and your toes and fingers hurt. It may be no coincidence that when recent ice ages began to roll across the landscape 400,000 years ago, we learned how to make fire.

In theory, the sun gives us all the heat we need: 3,000 times more energy than we use each day. But it's no use after sunset, or when winter strikes. Learning how to tear a branch off a tree and carry its stored solar energy into a cave must have been brilliant. Later, we learned how to make charcoal, burning the wood to get rid of the smoke, leaving a clean, glowing briquette. Charcoal burners were terrible forest destroyers, but we loved the result. It kept us warm.

For thousands of years, we hacked away at the forests. Then sometime in the 12th century, in England, the firewood began to run out. So people started using a nasty black substance called sea-coal. It made such a smell that it was quickly banned, but it was only a matter of time before everyone was using it. Coal. Ancient sunlight from ancient trees and ferns. We had discovered fossil fuels. The city air was disgusting, but oh, how warm everyone was.

All I want is a room somewhere,
Far away from the cold night air.
With one enormous chair,
Ah, wouldn't it be loverly?
Lots of choc'lates for me to eat,
Lots of coal makin' lots of heat.
Warm face, warm 'ands, warm feet,
Ah, wouldn't it be loverly?
(from My Fair Lady)

And then came natural gas, from plants and tiny creatures which died and sank to the ocean floor 300 million years ago. How modern! How civilized!

But how does this story end? North America's natural gas has already started to run scarce: we're on the downhill slope of the supply. The entire world's gas supply will peak by 2020 and be gone by 2060, assuming we're happy to liquefy it and ship it across the world in highly explosive tankers. It'll be far too expensive for most of us to use long before that.

So what then: back to coal? With climate change heating the oceans and burning the forests? I don't think so. To firewood? Not unless we want to clearcut BC. So what will we do? Electricity? Yes, it's possible, assuming we can generate enough sustainable electricity. But it's a very inefficient way to make heat.

How will we heat ourselves, when the gas runs out? This is a huge unanswered question that no one wants to address.

It's easy to design a zero-energy house. Make it passive solar in design to catch and store the sun's heat. Dig or drill down into the earth to make a ground-source heat system, and use solar photovoltaics to power a heat pump to deliver the warmth to your home. Add super-efficient windows, super insulation, and heat-recovery ventilators. Top it off with a solar hot water system.

But can we retrofit a whole city, to keep its inhabitants warm? It's a very big question. There are no easy answers, but there are some tantalizing clues.

In Zurich, Switzerland, engineers have created a 200-metre length of sewer pipe in which the bottom of the pipe acts as a heat pump. The pipe transfers the heat into a district heating system, which supplies a third of the heat for 940 homes, saving 1,500 tonnes of CO2 a year. Where there's sewage, there's heat. (www.rabtherm.de)

In Sutton (outside London, UK), the Beddington Zero Energy Development heats 93 units of super-efficient, solar buildings from a biomass cogeneration plant, using chipped tree trimmings that would otherwise have gone to the landfill. (www.bedzed.org.uk)

In Anneberg, in the city of Danderyd, Sweden, engineers have designed a 90-unit housing project where the south-facing roofs are completely covered with solar hot water systems. During the summer, the heat that's gathered is pumped 65 metres down into the ground with 100 boreholes. It's insulated with a 3-foot layer of foam, and when winter comes, it is brought back up again to heat the homes. (www.sb.luth.se/~bon/anneberg.htm)

In Okotoks, Alberta, a 52 unit solar-heated subdivision will be finished this fall: the first in North America. The heat will be gathered on the garage roofs and pumped underground, to be retrieved in winter. It's expensive, but it's doable, and with mass production, the price of solar heaters will come down.

But what about our existing cities? The good news is that the sun shines everywhere, and the ground exists everywhere. With evacuated solar tubes, the sun's heat can be gathered even under a cloudy sky. We could superinsulate and retrofit our buildings for district heating systems, collect solar heat off every available surface (roofs, walls, car-parks), and pump the heat underground to retrieve in winter.

Will it cost a lot? Yes. Will we decide to do it? Yes. Which would you rather do? Sit with your teeth chattering all winter in a house with no heat, or fork out for a permanent, sustainable, clean, silent, climate-friendly solution?

Guy Dauncey is president of the BC Sustainable Energy Association (www.bcsea.org), and author of Stormy Weather: 101 Solutions to Global Climate Change. *He lives in Victoria. www.earthfuture.com*

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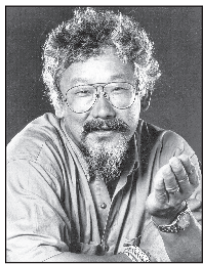

Car industry lies to Canadians

SCIENCE MATTERS

by David Suzuki

Canadians should be disgusted with their federal government, but not just because of what has come out at the Gomery inquiry.

No, Canadians should be outraged because, once again, their government has ignored the best interests of its citizens and refused to stand up to a corporate dinosaur. That dinosaur is the automotive industry, and the recently announced deal to reduce emissions amounts to nothing more than another government subsidy to prop up an industry that feeds off the health and pocketbooks of Canadians.

The new agreement, wrapped in obfuscating language about megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions and navel-gazing preamble after preamble, doesn't guarantee any improvements in fuel efficiency at all. In fact, it amounts to little more than a PR exercise for automakers and the feds.

On top of everything, it actually lies. Just look at the many preambles: "And whereas the Canadian automotive industry has shown good faith in meeting its commitments in other memoranda of understanding and is currently party to numerous successful active agreements;" A lie.

Way back in 1982, the industry fought like mad to derail fuel efficiency regulations that had already been passed by Parliament. Government caved in to the industry, which promised to meet the targets "voluntarily."

On paper, it met those targets. But in reality, the industry avoided them by exploiting a loophole that allowed it to build and promote more and more fuel-guzzling light trucks, which were exempt from the standard. The industry has also argued, threatened and whined about the "impossibility" of everything from smog-reducing catalytic converters to safety innovations like seatbelts and air bags.

Here's another good one: "And whereas the government of Canada acknowledges that the Canadian automotive industry has made significant progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving fuel efficiency since 1990;" Another lie.

Fuel efficiency has actually decreased in recent years because the industry is hell-bent on selling bigger, heavier and more expensive vehicles that cost less to make, like SUVs. But you don't have to take my word for it. Just look at a comprehensive analysis by economists Roger Bezdek and Robert Wendling published in *American Scientist*.

Bezdek and Wendling point out that average fuel economy for all new vehicles has declined from 26.2 mpg (8.9 l/100 km) in 1987 to 24.7 mpg (9.5 l/100 km) in 2004. They then point to more than two dozen technologies identified by the US National Research Council as technically feasible ways to make cars more fuel efficient today. They examine the costs of using these technologies and what it would mean for the industry and the economy. Their input-output analysis concludes that making cars burn less fuel would actually create more jobs, save money for consumers and improve the economy, in addition to reducing smog and climate change.

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Good for consumers, good for jobs, good for health, this win should have been relatively easy for the federal government. Polls show that 90 percent of Canadians want more efficient cars and the vast majority doesn't believe the industry's lies that making them would be either too difficult or too expensive.

California already set the precedent in North America by enacting laws that require a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from new cars, thus forcing the industry to improve fuel efficiency. Instead, we've got a voluntary agreement that guarantees nothing and again leaves enough loopholes to drive a diesel Hummer through. Canadians are being played for dupes by the industry and the feds are letting them get away with it. This industry lies. It lies and it lies and it lies. And our government doesn't have the guts to stand up to it.

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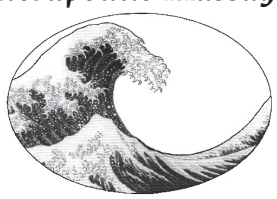

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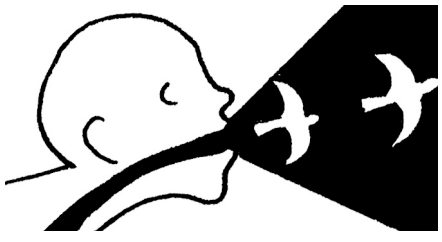

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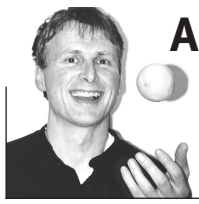

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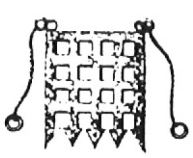

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Joy

SIMPLY WOMAN!

by Crystal Andrus

Many of us are programmed to believe that we are selfish or thoughtless if we take care of our own needs. We struggle with all that we have to do, resentful and running on empty most of the time, yet we refuse to do something proactive to change it. One thing we can do is simply learn to honour ourselves and set reasonable personal boundaries.

Setting boundaries is necessary in every relationship. At work and with friends and family, all succeed better when we all acknowledge and respect each others personal boundaries.

Without them, marriages crumble, friendships are ruined and children become rude and impertinent. Devoid of personal boundaries, we can wound our spirit by mistreating our bodies with excessive food or medicine, drugs, alcohol, or meaningless sex.

When I tell women to start making themselves a priority, many feel as though I've added one more task to their already daunting to-do list. However, this one is necessary if you want a joyous and fulfilling life. It's like when the mask drops down if oxygen levels get too low on an airplane. We are instructed to put our own mask on first before helping our child.

If we aren't okay, we are useless to everyone else. This is about honouring and celebrating yourself, and life. Take time for exercise, for time alone and for personal development. If you aren't living the life you want, eventually all the other things will fall apart anyway.

Nutrition

Not many people can be exuberant when they are famished. Just think of how cranky we become when we have gone too long without eating. Whenever I think that maybe food isn't a necessity in our pursuit of joy, I look at what happens to my normally joyous and happy children when they suddenly get hungry. We all need to eat to feel strong emotionally and physically, and although I do feel that a three-day juice fast once or twice a year is essential for optimum health, consistently going too long between meals cannot only lead to bingeing, it leaves us feeling shaky, miserable and very joyless. Isn't it ironic that too much food can bring us so much misery, and yet without it we die.

Take inventory this week, and make sure you are getting your three meals and two snacks every day, and not going more than four hours without eating.

Cut back on alcohol

I know how wonderful a glass of wine can sound at the end of a long, stressful day, but it may actually be our worst enemy. Alcohol is a depressant, not only on our mood and energy level but also on our metabolism. It dehydrates, causing water retention. It is very ageing, and because it is calorie-dense, it packs on the pounds quickly. Alcohol also depletes the body of vitamins C and B-complex. Plus, it is deadly to the liver. Women are more likely than men to develop cirrhosis of the liver and other related diseases, and because drinking is not as socially acceptable for women, they are not as likely to reach out for help.

More importantly, realize that we only choose to numb that which we are afraid of – what we can't face. If you are drinking every day or need alcohol whenever a crisis hits, look within and embrace the fact that life will never give you more than you can handle. Each time you rise above your desire to drink you can find your true strength, which has always been within you.

Get enough sleep

The average adult requires seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep every night. A lack of sleep will increase your susceptibility to illness and is linked to car accidents and industrial accidents. It will make you irritable, exhausted and even depressed. Sleep is also the time that our anti-aging hormone is released. Without deep sleep we are inhibiting our growth hormone thus speeding the aging process. If a lack of sleep is affecting your daily routine and/or causing depression, please seek help from a medical doctor or naturopath. You honestly cannot feel joyous about life when you are depleted and drained.

Exercise

If you are not shedding the pounds, it is time to become the cardio queen. Are you doing your optimal amount of cardio? Regardless of how many times you've been doing your cardio up until now, do it six times a week from now on at a hard intensity for 40-45 minutes. While you are shaping and sculpting those muscles, you have to burn the fat. Cut back on your carbs and increase your cardio. It works.

Crystal Andrus's column is a condensed version of her new book on personal transformation. She is an authority on women's health, a sought after speaker and author of the best seller Simply Woman! The 12 Week Body/Mind/Soul Total Transformation Program. *www.hayhouse.com/details.php?id=2247*

Summer lovin'

FILMS WORTH WATCHING

by Robert Alstead

My Summer of Love is a soft, sultry mirage of a film about a love affair between two teenage girls living in the hilly countryside of Yorkshire in the north of England. Mona, a working class lass, is fed up with her humdrum life, especially after her reformed, born-again brother (Paddy Considine) decides to convert the pub they inherited from their parents into a religious meeting area. When she wakes one day after basking on the heath, she finds the posh Tamsin looking down on her from atop a horse and an unlikely friendship blossoms between the two.

As in *The Last Resort*, director Pawel Pavlikovski is a master at conveying mood and story through the texture and composition of the moving image. The windswept Yorkshire hills, the terraced houses, dappled woods and shadowy interiors, help convey a warm summer languor. Nathalie Press as Mona and Emily Blunt as Tamsin put in impressive performances to create a palpable sense of intimacy and vulnerability. The short transition from buddies, through shared pain to romance never rings hollow, and ensures the dark denouement is all the more effective.

Everything's Gone Pete Tong is about a hedonistic DJ, who falls from grace when he loses his hearing, yet finds redemption, celebrates and sends up the rave culture and the music industry hilariously. The music's good too, if you like a bit of techno now and then.

Nathalie Press as Mona and Emily Blunt as Tamsin in Pavlikovski's ***My Summer of Love*****.**

Resfest

The second annual *Resfest*, which took place last month, is a new media festival where filmmakers, multimedia designers, video games creators, and digital artists share thoughts and ideas on their converging worlds and try to second guess what the next big thing will be.

As well as the more conventional screening of short films by the CBC's late night arts program/new media channel ZeD, you could also try out a prototype handheld digital tour guide that delivers video clips to you by wireless as you move around an environment, and visitors could also view some of the first Canadian video clips made specially for mobile phones. This is still very much cutting edge stuff, so the end product was far from stellar. With the handheld digital tour guide, video clips would start freezing as you moved around because the signal was not strong enough and as for the phone video clips, well, it's a very small screen.

As a new generation of handheld devices are released and telephone companies upgrade their networks later this year and early next year, the quality of the video clips and the quality of mobile content is sure to improve (at least for those who can pay the extra bucks). I'm sure that many readers have concerns about the health implications microwave/cellular networks have, but on the other side of the coin the promised land of wireless delivery will mean freedom to roam rather than being shackled to the office. At least, that's the theory.

Bike Ride

Last month was Bike Month, and included a night of eclectic films all relating to the bicycle. A couple stood out for me: Tom Schroeder's *Bike Ride* a rippling white-on-black, line-drawing animation where James Peterson tells the amusing story of elation and deflation of cycling 50 miles to see his girlfriend (you can view it online www.ifilm.com/ifilmdetail/986192, although you don't get quite the full fluid experience). Very different, but as memorable, was *Hiding From the Wind* by North Vancouver documentary maker Bruce Mohun. The short documentary follows Gabriola Island sculptor George Georgiev as he prepares to take the record for the fastest bike in the world. His machine, a sealed recumbent, looks more like a fish than a bike, and whistles as it touches speeds of 120-130 km/h. It drew gasps of awe from the gathered audience of Vancouver cyclists.

Looking forward

The summer blockbuster season is upon us. This month we have Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* (out now), Johnny Depp in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (15), sci-fi thriller *The Island* starring Ewan McGregor and Scarlett Johansson (22), and Terry Gilliam's *The Brothers Grimm* (29). In a different league, is the documentary *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill* (15). I haven't seen it but the storyline of "a homeless musician who finds meaning to his life when he starts a friendship with dozens of parrots" is intriguing to say the least.

Robert Alstead also writes online for www.iofilm.ca Email: robert@iofilm.ca

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BODY HEART & SOUL YOGA
Retreats with Elisabeth Michielsen September 10 - 16 "Coming Home" Six Day Retreat on Hornby Island. August 24 - September 2 Yoga Teacher Training Intensive - Part 1 of Certification 250-338-4263 www.bodyheartsoul.com

SHAMANISM

SHAMANIC DRUMMING CHANTING CIRCLE
Saturdays, July 9, August 13, 7-10pm. Shamanic journeying & healing. donation. Vancouver Multi-Cultural Centre. Turtle Island Healing Circles. 604.418.9636. www.drumcircles.ca

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Just look for the leaves.

GENUINE HEALTH

ehn is Genuine Health

ehn rebranding to Genuine Health reinforces their commitment to helping people lead healthier lives

ehn inc. may not be a household word, but there are very few Canadians that haven't heard of greens+, the flagship brand that has led the way for ehn's success in the natural health supplements sector.

Their success is a testimony to their commitment to provide well-researched, natural supplements that are truly effective, unique and relevant to Canadians in improving their health and ability to enjoy an active lifestyle.

The company will now be known as Genuine Health. Their new name reflects the fundamental philosophy and vision of the company's originators. It better represents the results the products bring.

The logo is a stylized lower case 'g' with a leaf incorporated into the letter shape to give it a very distinct, fresh look. It will appear on all packaging and other communication for the company.

"Consumers will not only be able to find our products more easily, but we expect that the information on our labels will help them make quicker and more informed purchase decisions," comments Lisa Chisholm, Director of Marketing, Genuine Health.

Genuine Health, based in Toronto, has over 35 award-winning products in various categories, from green foods, diet/weight management, and essential fatty acids to multi-vitamins and antioxidants. Each ingredient is sourced worldwide and put through extensive testing. All products are manufactured with the strictest quality control procedures and have Good Manufacturing Practices Licenses. 5% of the company's net profits go to support charitable activities such as the Change Canada Foundation.

For more information visit www.genuinehealth.com.

On Track Zodiac

July 2005 by Ilona Hedi Granik

ARIES (March 21 – April 19)
All the best of what they call a lucky break or good karma will spin the wheel in your favor. You are climbing up to another level of success. Ride the wave in total abandonment because opportunity is knocking right now and not later.

TAURUS (April 20 – May 21)
It's all about flow and less about control. You live wisely now as you recently learned that what you resist will persist. Besides, you better know that you don't have to be responsible for other people's business. You are master and servant on the best of terms.

GEMINI (May 22 – June 20)
If you feel more humbled lately, you got the message from your intuitive nature to wake up to it. We go through these grandiose dramas and then realize we didn't need to make choices from insecurity. Put your vision in front of you and let the past be the past. Move forward.

CANCER (June 21 – July 22)
If you are offered diamonds will you cherish them? If you gain respect will you continue to earn it or let it slip away. The possibility to let things slip through your hands may come up. Let opportunity in although you may not see it when it's right under your nose.

LEO (July 23 – Aug. 22)
You are mastering your emotions and taking stock of your life. With a good clear head you may feel in control of your moods. You retrieve parts of yourself that you had tucked away or given away. You are reclaiming your energy, becoming more fully responsible and aware.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 – Sept. 22)
As one seed somewhere grows, another life form is on its demise. The ebb and flow of life has captured your attention. You have optimism even while you witness leaves drifting on the river. Seems all too poetic while you understand that loss is natural and inevitable. Keep cherishing the moment.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 – Oct. 22)
If there ever was a time to make some lasting changes, this is it. You have chopped wood and carried water with the best of intentions. It's time to put that diligence to work. Your mind illuminates the idea and you carry it through just like a dance.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 – Nov. 21)
You can attract what you want with your usual flair. There is a magnetic pulse in your stride . The channels are open for you to pull in necessary people who assist in your process. The travel bug may also land you in deep water. Soak up the rays.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 – Dec. 21)
At last you are able to relax. You wanted more enjoyment and now you shall have it. Making fast friends and a possible new mate will make you come alive. Be mindful of what you dream for as now as it comes to light. Stay true to your goals.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 – Jan. 19)
Fantasy plays a large part in your life. Either you see only what you want to see or you invent the truth. In any case the possibility of confusion may alter your perceptions. Try to understand your reactions and stay clear of things that sound too good to be real.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 – Feb. 19)
Possible weight gain could have you feeling more solid. You have embraced a feeling of fullness as a way toward alignment. Either way you are balanced by the earthiness you feel. Whether you ballroom dance or skip rope, your heart is pumping nicely.

PISCES (Feb. 20 – March 20)
Self healing and any kind of pampering are on the hit parade now. It's all about you and getting what you need. This is a time of great joy and prosperity for you. You seek to serve your highest good and your body and spirit are happy for you.

Ilona Hedi Granik is a clairvoyant consultant and author with 31 years of experience in astrology, multi-media art and healing. Ilona23@shaw.ca

July is Celebration of Light and a lot more!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

List at: www.commonground.ca > Advertising > Datebook

DATEBOOK

JULY 7-10
West Coast Poetry Festival A free showcase, an eclectic sampling of word magic from all over Canada. See programme (page 8)

JULY 9
Shamanic Drumming Chanting Circle 7pm.Vancouver Multi-Cultural Centre 1254 W. 7th. Introduction to shamanic journeying for insight, healing and empowerment. Newcomvers pre-register 604.418.9636. Donation. Turtle Island healing Circles. www.drumcircles.com

JULY 9, 10
Diamond Approach Vancouver presents Joy on the Oath to Self-Realization. Explores our inherent capacity for joyful aliveness. 10-5 at 2277 W. 10th. $190. register 604-291-9033. judithbradley@shaw.ca

JULY 10
CDM Psychic Institute presents a Psychic Fair from 1-4pm. Receive a 15-20 minute reading of you - the soul. Get info about relationships, finances, spiritual purpose & more! Sample our Aura Healings! CDM Psychic Institute, 1114 W. Broadway, Suite 202, Vancouver. 604-730-8788.

JULY 8, 9, 10
Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Course. Intro: $10. Course: $295.00 Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818

JULY 13
Story Slam 9pm Our Town Cafe 245 E. Broadway Actors, writers, comics, storytellers, incorrigible liars: audience judges 5 minute stories. Win cash, get published in Common Ground (page 9).

JULY 16, 17
Animal Healing Course. Learn how to give Natural Spiritual Healing to animals in this beautiful in-depth course. Practical and theory covered. SRMH Centre 1-604-740-0898

JULY 22
Approaching 2012. Hear Chuck Little (The Storyteller) from Florida channelling. 7:30pm Best Western PoCo Inn, $33 (Bring a friend FREE) Tickets at Reflections Books or Carole (604) 942-2842

JULY 22-24
Exploring the Healing Potentials of Meaning and Mindfulness, a 3-day workshop conducted by Dr. Paul T. P. Wong and Ms. Nancy Fischer, July 22-24 Friday through Sunday at Coast Plaza Hotel, Vancouver. Call 604-649-8289 or visit www.meaning.ca for details.

JULY 23
Treating Trauma Workshop, for Therapists – learn the effective Rewind Technique, widely used in the UK. For more details please see: www.deborahfish.com and click on "Vancouver".

AUG 17-21
Satsang with Neelam who teaches with the blessing of HWL Poonja (Papaji) 7:30pm, Aug 17&18. Suggested donation $20. All are welcome. Masonic Hall, 1495 W. 8th Avenue. Day-long satsang August 20&21. Registration required for Sunday Aug 21. 604-254-9150 to register/info.

SUNDAYS
The Centre for Spiritual Living Inspired by the teachings of Deepak Chopra and Louise Hay? You'll love our Sunday services, 11:00am. Children welcome. 1495 W. 8th Ave, Vancouver, 604-321-1225 www.cslvancouver.com

International Spiritualist Alliance #1A -320 Columbia Street, New West (Downstairs) 604-521-6336 . Sunday Services 11am . Rev. Joyce Tarvin 604-433-6663 See resource directory. www.isacanada.ca

MONDAYS
Free acupuncture consultation (with acupuncture treatment only). Relieve stress and pain etc. Acuqimed Centre at Broadway Station. B.C Reg. By appt: 604-961-8834

TUESDAYS
Reflexology Student Clinic sessions - only $15. Evenings only. By appointment. Pacific Institute of Reflexology. 604.875.8818

WEDNESDAYS
Hawaiian Healing Night 7pm. Hawaiian guided Meditation, Sharing the Aloha,and snacks after, meet like-minded people and share. $5.00 donation. At Hale Ola - a place of Healing 1215 Madison ave. Burnaby 604-431-7474 Kaimana and Moanikeala

Meditation & Self-inquiry: Have you lost the balance and rhythm in your life? Let stillness (through self-inquiry) return your wholeness. 5-7 pm. 317-1613.

THURSDAYS
Natural Spiritual Healing or Progressive Counselling at GaiaGarden, Kitsilano. Effective, safe treatment for all illnesses, injuries, life situations. Free consultations available. SRMH Centre 1-604-740-0898

Foundation Of The Zen Practice Course. 7pm St. Michael's Anglican Church 409 E.Broadway Call 604 876-4349 to register. www.newmoonbuddhist.org

FRIDAYS
Just Dance. Evening of passion and let go. Dance the rhythms of the world. 2nd and 4th Fridays of each month. $8 smoke & alcohol free. 2114 West 4th www.just-dance.ca

Are you interested in writing rich, meaningful and purpose-driven narratives? Then learn to write from stillness. 7-9 am. Michael: 317-1613.

ONGOING
The Squamish Nation and the Roundhouse offer Uts'am/Witness cultural and environmental education camping and ceremony weekends north of Squamish. $15pp, 604-713-1800, www.roundhouse.ca

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A Course in Miracles drop in study group, 7:30 pm, 517 E 17th St. North Van. Suggested drop in donation. Tuesdays & Sundays Call Susan 604 987-6985.

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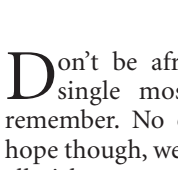

Friendly advice

CULTURE

TWENTY SOMETHING

by Ishi Dinim

Don't be afraid. This could be the single most important thing to remember. No one is perfect. There is hope though, we can always improve. We all pick our spots to shine and feel a loss for a missed opportunity.

I think most humans have an innate desire to do good things, bettering their own lives and those around them. Sometimes figuring out the best way to do it is difficult. I've been trying to distill it all down into the ultimate simple idea to help my fellow human. But I couldn't, instead I came up with two and a bit.

The first one seems simple: think. Just take time to think. However that works for you. All I ask is that you do it carefully, with equal parts imagination and self-reflection. Oh yeah, also try to do it as long as you remain conscious and for the rest of your life. It will reap great benefits in every area of your life; decision making will become more difficult or less depending on the situation.

I know, "Where does this guy get off with his pedantic self-righteous paternalistic tone telling me how to live?" Well, it all fits into my second idea which also has a hidden third idea, an invisible one, which I hope to possibly make visible by bundling. But now I digress.

Last week before we went to work I was chatting with my friend. We were getting really inspired by sharing stories about people, films, and ideas in our recent journeys. We nodded our heads in support of peace, economic and democratic reforms, sustaining our planet, and many other progressive ideals. We reached a bit of an impasse when the topic of vegetarianism came up. I held up a copy of a documentary that I wanted him to watch. He said, "The people who made that movie probably care more about those animals than the homeless guy down the street from them." It was a good point, and quite possibly a true one. I responded, "Well, they are giving a voice to creatures that can't stick up for themselves, and they're exposing an unseen side of our society." After a bit of an awkward silence we simply slid onto a different subject. Needless to say I not so subtly badgered him for the rest of the day about how a meat based diet is probably the most harmful and easily changeable part of human life.

> ***The first one seems simple: think. Just take time to think. However that works for you. All I ask is that you do it carefully, with equal parts imagination and self-reflection. Oh yeah, also try to do it as long as you remain conscious and for the rest of your life.***

The reason I'm recounting this conversation is important. I assume that he felt threatened that I might call into question a part of his way of life, just like how I feel when people criticize my modus operandi. Believe me I am not beyond contempt: I drive, eat seafood, dairy, and eggs, I watch TV and gamble. I drink fair-trade organic coffee in a reusable cup, and judge myself, him, her and them all day long. We all rationalize our actions so that we can live with ourselves. As much as I want to do the right thing, sometimes I don't and I have to live with those results.

What is the single most important thing that a progressive considerate person desiring to change the world can do? I don't know, you tell me.

Link it up for free docs:
www.meetyourmeat.com
www.tribeofheart.org
www.velolove.bc.ca

Quotes:

I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our moneyed corporations, which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength and bid defiance to the laws of our country.

– Thomas Jefferson

Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.

– Albert Einstein

A man gotta be balanced. You can't just be about the pleasures.

– stic.man, Dead Prez

Ishi graduated from Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design in 2001, with a BFA major in photography. He makes films, collects cacti, and ponders many things. Currently he is trying to figure out what to do with the rest his life. contactishi@yahoo.ca waiting to hear echoes back.

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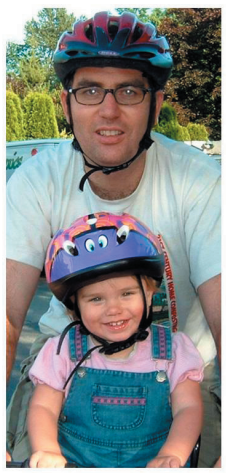

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The trouble with Teflon

by Tyler Bradley

PCB, DDT, PVC and CFC are all acronyms that strike fear.

Less well known from the "least wanted" list of toxins are the perfluorochemicals or PFCs. They are the latest collection of man-made chemicals whose intended functions, however benevolent and well intentioned, have become overshadowed by their inherent risks and irrevocable ability to do harm.

Today, PFCs are everywhere. They are the stain repellent in your carpet, the water-repellent membrane in your parka, the non-stick coating in pans. But they are also the most persistent synthetic chemicals in history – chemicals that are found in more than 90 percent of North Americans' blood, chemicals whose terminal breakdown components are implicated in birth defects, cancer, organ damage and respiratory failure.

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Perfluorochemicals were first made commercially available just over 50 years ago. Engineered for their water repellent qualities, low friction and strong chemical bonds, PFCs such as DuPont's Teflon were rushed into the marketplace to capitalize on their miraculous, space-age characteristics.

The perfluorochemical industry flourished. PFC makers like 3M and DuPont enjoyed massive profits (and in many cases, continue to do so) while regulatory bodies passed over the chemicals that manufacturers claimed were safe.

Recent discoveries, however, show that the truth behind PFCs is as contrary to the chemical industry's collective assertions as is humanly and scientifically possible.

Many PFCs require the use of perfluorooctanoic acid/C8 (PFOA) and/or perfluorosulphonates (PFOS) in their manufacture. PFOA, as with all members of the PFC family, is highly persistent. For all intents and purposes, it does not biodegrade, at least not for tens of thousands of years.

PFOA is now under scrutiny as a toxin; it has been observed as an off-gas degradation component from common household items, and has been found in both wildlife and human blood as well as human breast milk the world over.

In laboratory tests, PFOA exposure has proven especially dangerous to the unborn. Extremely high mortality rates were observed in rats exposed to levels of PFOA that human children sometimes reach. PFC concentrations are especially high in children, whether as a result of higher exposure rates, or slower metabolism of the chemicals. PFOA and other PFCs are estimated to have a half-life of four and a half years in the human body. For PFOS, another toxic PFC, eight and a half years is a conservative estimate put forth by 3M.

The most sobering fact surrounding the PFC debacle, though, has been the systematic suppression of data collected by DuPont prior to the EPA forcing it to disclose findings.

Although not previously bound by law to make employee medical records and research archives public, or even open to regulatory agencies, one would like to believe that there is an overriding moral obligation on the part of such corporations to disclose details pertaining to hazardous materials that are in use within our homes and in our everyday lives.

Presently, DuPont faces as much as a $300 million fine for decades of putting PFCs on the market when it was unsafe to do so. More than a slap on the wrist but consider that figure in relation to DuPont's 2004 revenues of $27 billion.

Whatever combination of censure, condemnation and forgiveness we decide to take with these corporations, the toxic facts and the chemicals remain. We're stuck with PFOA and its off-gas siblings for the long run. As the story develops, the most active role we can take at this point is to better our understanding of the chemicals to learn what it is we are dealing with.

Avenues to explore:

www.ewg.org The Environmental Working Group has loads of info – see especially: *PFCs: A Family of Chemicals That Contaminate the World.*

www.cbc.ca

CBC *Marketplace* program from March 20, *Something's in the Air.*

www.enn.com Search: ski wax toxicity

Google search: Toxic Teflon.

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command and control post went off with red lights blinking on the terminal."

"It was a nasty shock," Petrov later recounted to *The Moscow News*. "Everyone jumped from their seats, looking at me. What could I do? There was an operations procedure that I had written myself. We did what we had to do. We checked the operation of all systems - on 30 levels, one after another. Reports kept coming in: All is correct; the probability factor is two."

Which is apparently the highest probability the system would allow: near-certainty.

Duty officer Petrov had a decision to make, and very little time to make it. He could push the button, initiating an irreversible chain reaction in a system geared to launch a counter-strike without human interference. Or he could report up the command chain (the terminus being General Secretary Andropov with his nuclear briefcase), with any US missiles taking only 15 minutes to reach Soviet territory. It was impossible to analyze such a situation comprehensively within a matter of minutes. All Petrov had to rely on was his intuition, and a growing suspicion that things weren't right. "Missile attacks do not start from just one base, he reasoned. He also was aware there were " lots of things a computer could mistake for a missile launch."

Working with questionable but possibly correct information, the lieutenant colonel deemed the signal a false alarm. But his uncertainty only grew. The computer system indicated a second missile launch from the continental US missile fields toward the Soviet Union. Then a third missile, then a fourth and a fifth.

The alarms sounding in Serpukhov-15 were deafening. Lt. Col. Petrov stood watching a red button flashing "Start" in bright lettering. Time was running out - he could not wait to confirm the launch by radar. Soviet land radar was incapable of detecting any incoming missiles from beyond the horizon, which would only have been useless information by the time it was confirmed. He made his decision: Lt. Col. Stanislav Petrov would not press the button.

The mistaken signal had its origins in the peculiarly Soviet means of detecting ICBM launches. Instead of looking down on the entire Earth's surface in the manner of US satellites, Soviet satellites of the time aimed at an oblique angle, from a distance, watching the line between the upper atmosphere and outer space. This reduced the chance of mistaking naturally occurring phenomena for a missile launch. At several miles above the Earth, missiles would appear silhouetted against the black background of space.

The Soviet system was meant to nix reflections and refractions, along with a whole range of industrial and natural phenomena, as a false signal. But somehow the sun, the satellite, and US missile fields aligned in such a way that sunlight reflected from high-altitude clouds was electronically interpreted as a launch. Petrov later described the situation as "God's own joke out of outer space."

At the time, Petrov was not at all convinced he had acted correctly by not pressing the button, or by not passing the report up to superiors. "Not 100 percent sure. Not even close to 100 percent," he later told reporter Mark McDonald for a Knight Ridder news report. "Waiting the next 15 minutes to see what would happen was most unnerving: Yes, terrifying. Most unpleasant."

Petrov and the officers present at the bunker waited tensely. There were no more signals of ICBM launches. No missiles rained down on the fatherland. He had made the right decision.

This is where Petrov's story moves into high farce. In the non-nuclear aftermath, a high-level commission headed by Col. Gen. Yuri Votintsev, commander in chief of the USSR missile and air defence forces, investigated the officer's decision. Petrov later told The Moscow News ***that upon arrival at the headquarters, Votintsev had promised to put him in for a decoration, but then "put the squeeze" on the lieutenant colonel. Votintsev wanted to know why the operations log was not filled in at the time. Petrov responded that he had a phone in one hand, for reporting the situation up the command chain, and an intercom in the other, for issuing commands to subordinates. He was physically unable to write anything at the time.***

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When asked why he hadn't filled it in later, when the alert was off, Petrov demonstrated a canny understanding of military double-binds. He recounted the potential trap for *Moscow News*. "Oh, come on, I thought – just to end up in jail, when, in a reenactment of the incident, an investigator would sit at the control panel, pick up the phone and intercom, and try to write in the logbook in real time? That would have been forgery, pure and simple."

Petrov received no commendation for preventing World War III – just a dressing down from his superiors. The officer understood the tacit reason. If he was to be decorated for that incident, the blame would have had to fall elsewhere; "above all, those who had developed the BMEWS, including our renowned academicians who had received billions and billions in funding."

What if he had decided otherwise? "If the Soviet Union had overreacted, it could have gone very badly, former KGB officer Oleg A. Gordievsky told *The Baltimore Sun*. "If war had come, Soviet missiles would have destroyed Britain entirely, at least half of Germany and France, and America would have lost maybe 30 percent of its cities and infrastructure." That estimate is only for the one side's destruction; the detection of a Soviet launch by US satellites would have elicited an immediate, devastating response from the Pentagon. "This is the closest we've come to accidental nuclear war," noted Bruce Blair, director of the US Center for Defense Information, of the September 26 incident. A quickly escalating nuclear exchange could very well have emptied or destroyed each side's remaining arsenals. Reagan's "morning in America" would have been "mourning in America," reducing both nations, US and Soviet, to what writer Jonathan Schell described as a "republic of insects and grass." A subsequent nuclear winter, in which darkness would have fallen across the planet due to atmospheric dust, would likely have spelled the end for human civilization and most lifeforms.

Lest we think this one mistaken launch warning a total anomaly, it should be remembered the nuclear weapons arsenals are still on hair-trigger alerts. Throughout the cold war there have been at least nine documented incidents of mistaken signals on both the US and Soviet side when the thermonuclear sword came down upon all our heads (flights of geese in one incident, a Norwegian missile launch in another, a rising moon, etc.). Today the Bush administration has reworked its nuclear response to endorse using small-yield, tactical nuclear missiles against "rogue nations." Thanks to US theocons taking instruction from Book of Revelations, nuclear war has gone from unthinkable to thinkable.

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Recently the 66-year-old Petrov told the *Christian Science Monitor* that he wished he could say there is no chance of an accidental nuclear launch today. "But when we deal with space – when we [play] God – who knows what will be the next surprise?" It's a sentiment the Crusade-minded warriors in the White House would do well to heed.

Can we always rely on a man of Petrov's forebearance, reserve and inner strength each time the nuclear clock ticks one second closer to midnight? It's crazy to expect any one individual in a sensitive position to save humanity – though in this case this seems to be precisely what happened.

In the end, the Soviet military neither rewarded nor honoured Stanislav Petrov for his actions. It did not punish him either. But his once promising military career had come to an end. He was reassigned to a less sensitive position and soon retired from the military because of stress. He and his sick wife moved to an apartment in Friazino, a town just out of Moscow. A brief but significant eruption of international interest in his story left him with "a clutch of business cards" from both Russian and foreign reporters.

According to an article last year in the Moscow News, the initial resurgence of interest in Petrov's story did not exactly translate into quotidian terms. His wife died, and at one point Petrov had to spend several months at home in bed, his legs so badly swollen that he could not walk. "The only local doctor who makes house calls is a GP, but the retired lieutenant colonel needs a cardiovascular specialist who has to be paid, while Petrov's small military pension is his only source of income – his and his son's." As in most small towns in Russia, unemployment is high in Friazino. His son, a programmer, cannot get a job, and "the colonel can't get a job sweeping the streets, although he wouldn't have minded."

Fortunately, Petrov is at last getting some recognition and respect. Last May, the San Francisco-based Association of World Citizens honoured him with a small financial award of $1000. Arseny Roginsky, the director of Russia's human rights organization, Memorial, congratulated Petrov on behalf of AWC in an awards ceremony that took place at the offices of *The Moscow News*.

"All the 20 years that passed since that moment, I didn't believe I had done something extraordinary," Petrov told *USA Today* in 2004. "I was simply doing my job and I did it well." "Foreigners tend to exaggerate my heroism," he told another reporter from Moscow. "I was in the right place at the right moment." The man who saved the Earth prefers to think there was nothing that extraordinary in his decision. He just followed his conscience, listened to his intuition, and did the job he was assigned to do that momentous day in September 1983.

Vancouver writer and political cartoonist Geoff Olson can be reached at gefo@telus.net

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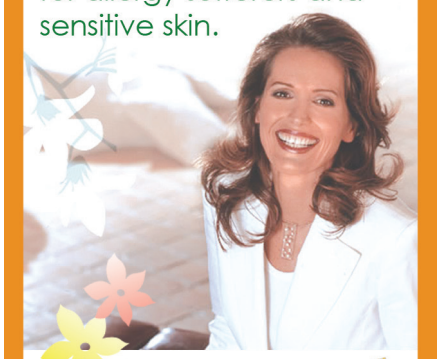

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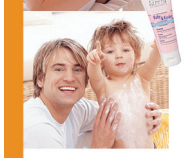

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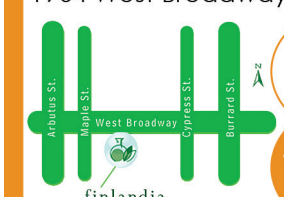

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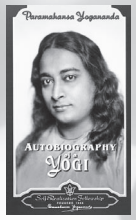

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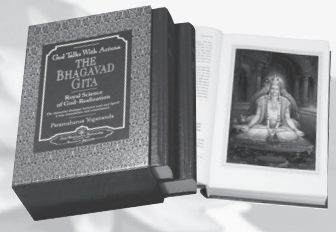

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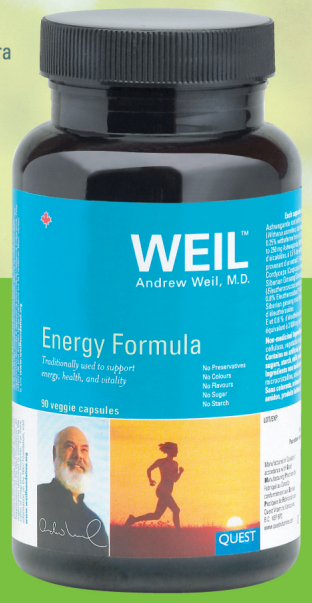

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